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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



June 2011

Vol. 116, No. 6



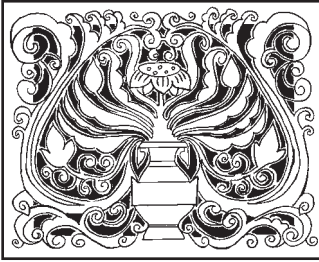
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Vol. 116, No. 6
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Contents



Amrita Kalasha

EDITORIAL OFFICE

Prabuddha Bharata
Advaita Ashrama
PO Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt Champawat · 262 524
Uttarakhand, India
E-mail: prabuddhabharata@gmail.com
pb@advaitaashrama.org

PUBLICATION OFFICE

Advaita Ashrama
5 Dehi Entally Road
Kolkata · 700 014
Tel: 91 · 33 · 2264 0898 / 2264 4000
2286 6450 / 2286 6483
E-mail: mail@advaitaashrama.org

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VIVEKANANDA—A BORN LEADER

by Asim Chaudhuri

The profile of Vivekananda as “A Leader” had previously never been studied and thought about on its own, especially in the light of modern management and leadership theories. The author shows that Vivekananda preached and practised the sublime concept of servant-leadership in his life and within his organization eighty years before it was introduced to the corporate world and was accepted as the most singular and powerful statement of leadership concept in modern times.

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Freedom From Desire

June 2011
Vol. 116, No. 6

कामस्तदग्रे समवर्तताधि मनसो रेतः प्रथमं यदासीत् ।
सतो बन्धुमसति निरविन्दन्हृदि प्रतीष्या कवयो मनीषा ॥

In the beginning there was desire, which was the first seed of the mind;
sages, having meditated in their hearts have discovered by their wisdom the
connection of the existent with the non-existent.

(Rig Veda, 10.129.4)

कामान्यः कामयते मन्यमानः स कामभिर्जायते तत्र तत्र ।
पर्याप्तकामस्य कृतात्मनस्तु इहैव सर्वे प्रविलीयन्ति कामाः ॥

He who covets the desirable things, while brooding (on their virtues), is born
amidst those very surroundings along with the desires. But for one who has got
his wishes fulfilled and who is Self-poised, all the longings vanish even here.

(Mundaka Upanishad, 3.2.2)

कामोऽकार्षीन्नमो नमः। कामोऽकार्षीत्कामः करोति नाहं करोमि कामः कर्ता नाहं
कर्ता कामः कारयिता नाहं कारयिता एष ते काम कामाय स्वाहा ॥

Salutations to the gods. Desire performed the act. Desire did the act. Desire
is doing the act, not I. Desire is the agent, not I. Desire causes the doer to act,
not I. O Desire, fascinating in form, let this oblation be offered to thee. Svaha.

(Mahanarayana Upanishad, Section 61)

आत्मानं चेद्विजानीयादयमस्मीति पूरुषः ।
किमिच्छन्कस्य कामाय शरीरमनुसंज्वरेत् ॥

If a man knows the Atman as 'I am this', then desiring what and for whose
sake will he suffer in the wake of the body?

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 4.4.12)

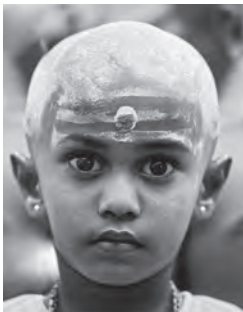
THIS MONTH

Finding Our Roots is the spiritual search of our origins, which are palpable everywhere. Human intelligence, though the key to open doors, sometimes bars us from actualizing this Reality. This month's editorial takes us down the labyrinth to discover our roots and the hidden wealth.

Keep looking at Kali and she, the Divine Mother, will reveal her benign form. Swami Sandarshananda of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar, unveils Kali's mystique in **Kali: The Mysterious Primal Energy**.



One of the epithets Swami Vivekananda gave Sri Ramakrishna is *yoga-sahaya*, helper for attaining yoga. Swami Vyomananda, a senior monk at the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Varanasi, wonderfully describes this role of the avatara and what yoga is for this age in **Yoga-sahaya Sri Ramakrishna**.



Language has a long history behind it and reflects the various stages of social evolution. Some significant words can be traced to discover the history of the culture that gave rise to it. Kamalika Mazumder, MA in Ancient History and Culture and MPhil

in History from Calcutta University, uses her academic skills in tracing the **Significance of the Term Putra in Vedic Literature**.

The Indian judiciary, which was accused of being impotent and corrupt, is slowly throwing away this ignominy and girding itself to face the mighty work before it. **Swami Vivekananda in India's Supreme Court Judgements** by Mohana Suryanarayanan, a retired headmaster from Chennai, shows how the court has been quoting Swami Vivekananda's teachings in delivering justice.



Dr D Nirmaladevi, Reader, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala, writes in **Sri Narayana**



Guru's Idea of the Absolute how this saint, who peacefully brought about revolutionary social changes, was a great harmonizer of philosophy as well. The author deals with the Guru's basic concepts.

Among the main functions of an avatara is his role as a world teacher. His message is new and suited to the age. Swami Bhajanananda, Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, surveys Sri Ramakrishna's principal teachings and how they have brought harmony in **Sri Ramakrishna: A 'New Man' of the Age – III**.

Finding Our Roots

CEREBRAL HUMANKIND IS wonderfully analytical. The brain's cerebrum, which has made humans vastly superior to all creation, analyses, examines, dissects, and studies things down to smaller and smaller scales with the purpose of understanding their nature and workings. Ideally, knowledge of the minute gives rise to knowledge of the vast. If one knows the seed, one can know the tree. In the *Chhandogya Upanishad* we find a father teaching his son: 'O good looking one, as by knowing a lump of gold all things made of gold become known.'

Paradoxically, this human cerebral capacity instead of opening grander vistas of the universe sometimes obstructs our view of the big picture. This is more profoundly felt in daily lives. We are so immersed in the small picture and small details of things that we lose sight of the whole. The immediate needs of survival and attention act like a deadweight. We are so bogged down with the innumerable cares and minute details of life that we hardly enjoy the vast and variegated life that spreads before us. There are some who take delight in this by shutting themselves in labs, work, and mental processes while the larger vital aspects of life pass by. Psychologically, we are enmeshed with some emotion or worry, and extricating our minds from them is difficult. We tend to see and brood over the small picture, which makes our existence feel like being in a dungeon. The mind is so vast, so powerful, and so full of potential, but all this is wasted on a few small details, sensations, and emotions. We are ostrich-like refusing to face larger facts.

What is the large picture? It is the magnificent way that life manifests in innumerable channels. The pessimist will perhaps view this as fraught with death and destruction. It has nothing to do with optimism or pessimism; however, it is necessary to eradicate the foolish notion of life divorced from death. Life and death are the obverse and reverse of the same phenomena. One has to take in the big picture. It also follows that notions of heaven and hell, pain and pleasure, joy and sorrow, also need to be clubbed together. Sometimes, with all our intellectual acumen and fine theories, we are so naive in believing the contrary. A life that integrates both and sees the large picture is indeed a blessed life. This is where the iconography of Kali, a composite of seemingly conflicting forces, becomes unified and meaningful.

Philosophically, metaphysically, and scientifically we cannot ignore all the signs that teach oneness. All phenomena arise from a common source. Yet, in our thoughts, words, and deeds we shut ourselves from our roots. What could be more simple and comfortable: 'I and you', though it is basically wrong. Instead of seeing a rich variegated picture of nature our minds have chopped and distorted it into small parts.

The ancient seers of India saw life in its totality, composed of *prana* and *akasha*. All the known and unknown forces—subtle and gross, external and internal—are *prana*; all the known and unknown matter—subtle and gross, external and internal—is *akasha*. The combination of this dynamic *prana* and *akasha*, constantly

interacting at all levels, creates this wonderful panorama of the universe, from the genetic material to an amoeba to a tiger to the supernova—everything in the universe. What is seemingly dead today will awake with life tomorrow. Minerals are absorbed by plants, which are eaten by humans; and that same element is now alive. Swami Vivekananda graphically describes projection: ‘Then arises motion in this ocean of Akasha by the action of this Prana, and as this Prana begins to move, to vibrate, out of this ocean come the various celestial systems, suns, moons, stars, earth, human beings, animals, plants, and the manifestations of all the various forces and phenomena.’

This creation is an infinite ocean of *prana* and *akasha*. It would be hypocritical to have spoken against dualism and yet come down to the explanation of dual forces. But unlike scientists, who also show the unity of matter and energy, the sages of India, through their spiritual vision, showed that both these forces are unified in the mind. Everything has come from the cosmic mind, including the brains of all beings. Like putting the cart before the horse, it is unreasonable to assume that the workings of the brain give rise to the mind and at the same time defend free will. The limited and bound brain giving rise to freedom! This line of thinking has unsettled the understanding of many people for centuries. The cosmic mind projects the entire creation and absorbs it into itself in unending cycles.

The sages plunged deeper than this universal mind, beyond the picture and the canvas on which it is painted, and found the very stuff of what gave rise to them. They discovered the Reality, which is Consciousness and Bliss. This Satchidananda is the warp and woof of the picture. In a superfine and scintillating discussion between the female sage Gargi and Yajnavalkya, in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, she puts in-

telligent questions and he answers by showing that each element is *otascha protascha*, pervaded like warp and woof, by a subtler element, till they finally come to the *akshara*, the Imperishable, which pervades, rules, and holds the micro and the macro, internal and external universe. Sri Ramakrishna says that it was ‘God alone who had become all living beings. They appeared as countless bubbles or reflections in the Ocean of Satchidananda. Again, I find sometimes that living beings are like so many pills made of Indivisible Consciousness. Once I was on my way to Burdwan from Kamarpukur. At one place I ran to the meadow to see how living beings are sustained. I saw ants crawling there. It appeared to me that every place was filled with Consciousness.’

It is the pursuit and actualization of this Reality that makes humans truly divine. With our analytical acumen we should learn to dive down deeper and deeper to find the common ground, the basis of the universe, for the cerebrum that makes us intelligent and unique is also associated with consciousness. This is the path that those ancient sages trod, and they discovered the Reality behind the universe in their own purified heart, beyond *prana*, *akasha*, and the cosmic mind. The deeper one plunges the vaster one becomes, and then both the small and the big picture open up. Cerebral humankind has one great help in this endeavour: the avatara, who comes as the *yoga-sahaya*, helper to attain yoga, in every age.

The picture that was distinct from us is now entered into. By knowing a ‘lump of gold all things made of gold become known’; similarly, by knowing the Reality we do not just know the universe but become the universe. This is the root, as the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says: ‘Knowledge, Bliss, Brahman, the supreme goal of the dispenser of wealth as well as of him who has realized Brahman and lives in It.’



Kali: The Mysterious Primal Energy

Swami Sandarshananda

THE UNIVERSE HAS two principles: dynamic and static or, in other words, relative and absolute. Kali embodies the dynamic principle of God, who is absolute. When these principles are personalized, Kali is *maheshapriyam*, dear to God, and both are interdependent. Consequent upon their unbreakable union is the birth of this vast universe. She is *anandamayi*, blissful, and *chaitanyamayi*, consciousness, and *jagadamba*, the mother of the universe. Her creation, preservation, and dissolution of the universe is an endless cyclic process. The manifestation of this truth, in a symbolic way, was seen by Sri Ramakrishna in a vision:

He saw that a female figure of extraordinary beauty rose from the waters of the Ganga and came with a dignified gait to the Panchavati. Presently he saw that the said figure was in an advanced stage of pregnancy; a few minutes later he saw that she gave birth to a beautiful baby in his very presence and suckled the baby very affectionately; the next moment he saw that the same figure assumed a very cruel and frightful appearance and, taking the baby into her mouth, masticated it and swallowed it!¹

All opposites such as good and evil, affection and repulsion, life and death, are Kali's works. Her power is omnipotent and she works incessantly. Sri Ramakrishna teaches: 'One must propitiate the Divine Mother, the Primal Energy, in order to obtain God's grace. God Himself is the Mahamaya, who deludes the world with Her illusion and conjures up the magic of creation, preservation, and destruction. She has spread

the veil of ignorance before our eyes. We can go into the inner chamber only when She lets us pass through the door.'²

God, thought within the framework of time-space-causation, is Kali. As the primordial energy she is endowed with infinite knowledge, will, and activity. Her incessant activity is destructive as well as constructive. Nothing, whether propitious or pernicious, is therefore outside her sway. Kali is the divine dispenser of both *bhoga*, worldly enjoyment, and *moksha*, spiritual emancipation. *Vidya* and *avidya*, knowledge and ignorance, are her two influences. *Avidya* deludes and leads to good and bad experiences. It has a twofold action: covering the reality and deflecting the mind to other things. *Vidya* leads one to God through devotion, yoga, wisdom, and love.

Staunch Vedantists consider her as *maya*. Interestingly, Sri Ramakrishna's guru Tota Puri, who was endowed with the immediate experience of Brahman, was compelled to accept Kali through a mystical experience he had at Dakshineswar. Merging his mind in the highest samadhi was natural to him, yet a relentless intestinal pain overran his mastery of the mind. One night, while the pain grew unbearable, he became annoyed with his own body and decided to commit it to the Ganga. Determined, he waded into the water and advanced, but could not find water deep enough to drown himself. He was surprised and thought:

What strange divine Maya is this? ... And immediately some one, as it were from within, pulled off the veil over his intellect. Tota's

mind was dazzled by a bright light and he saw, 'Mother, Mother, Mother; Mother, the origin of the universe, Mother the unthinkable power; Mother in land and Mother in water; the body is Mother, and the mind is Mother; illness is Mother, and health is Mother; knowledge is Mother, and ignorance is Mother; life is Mother, and death is Mother; everything I see, hear, think or imagine is Mother. ... It is that Mother again who is also beyond body, mind and intellect—the Mother, the supreme 'fourth', devoid of all attributes.'³

The Goddess: Personal and Impersonal

Kali is thus the relative, integrated in the absolute. She is *saguna*, with attributes, as well as *nirguna*, without attributes. This dichotomy

that makes her an impenetrable riddle is never understood unless she wills it. Her world bewitching maya of lust and greed is impregnable. One rarely slips out of its stranglehold without her grace.

Sri Ramakrishna commenced praying to Kali in an image, but ended up in *nirvikalpa* samadhi. He described the ultimate Reality as Mother and established a relationship with her as a child. For him both the personal and impersonal God were one, real, and tangible. The inscrutability of Kali did not strike him as confusing. She was palpable to him with a form as well as without form. In the course of a discussion about Sri Ramakrishna Swami Vivekananda once said:

Owing to the extreme poverty of his family, Shri Ramakrishna was obliged to become in his boyhood a priest in a temple dedicated to the Divine Mother, also called Prakriti, or Kali, represented by a female figure standing with feet on a male figure, indicating that until Maya lifts, we can know nothing. Brahman is neuter, unknown and unknowable, but to be objectified He covers Himself with a veil of Maya, becomes the Mother of the Universe, and so brings forth the creation. The prostrate figure (Shiva or God) has become Shava (dead or lifeless) by being covered by Maya.⁴

Swamiji begins his *Inspired Talks* with the interpretation of the theme of maya from the Bible's perspective: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (7.3). He correlates the inextricable link between idea and word with the inalienable connection between maya and Brahman. Each word, spoken or heard, is *vaikhari*, gross; the subtle



impulse of thought is *madhyama*, middle; in its causal state, the thought wave is *pashyanti*, seen, thought is here differentiated; and in its primordial undifferentiated form it is the cosmic vibration called *para*. Swamiji shows the non-dual relationship between Kali and Brahman, drawing on the analogy between sound and its higher dimension through his own experience:

The microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan. Just as the individual soul is encased in the living body, so is the universal Soul in the Living Prakriti [Nature]—the objective universe. Shivā [i.e. Kali] is embracing Shiva: this is not a fancy. This covering of the one [Soul] by the other [Nature] is analogous to the relation between an idea and the word expressing it: they are one and the same; and it is only by a mental abstraction that one can distinguish them. Thought is impossible without words. Therefore, in the beginning was the Word etc.

This dual aspect of the Universal Soul is eternal. So what we perceive or feel is this combination of the Eternally Formed and the Eternally Formless' (9.291).

Sages of yore conceptualized this abstract idea into a *pratima*, image, demonstrating God's dynamism and pacifism together. Eventually, countless aspirants found it useful to worship, pray, and fix their minds on it. This proves that anthropomorphic representations of the Divine are crucial to human nature for the purpose of *upasana*, worship. The display of God's cosmic power, with its destructive and creative urges side by side, is Kali—her blood-red tongue sticking out, a downcast gaze, and a bewitching smile. Lying below under her feet like a corpse and looking intently up at her with a beatific smile is the tranquil Shiva.

Shiva's body is made of *vishuddha-jnana*, pure knowledge:

Traditionally, Shiva is shown as absorbed in meditation, his body smeared with ashes, his neck garlanded with hissing snakes, and a third eye between his other two eyes, emitting fire. Shiva's third eye, the eye of discrimination, emits the fire of dispassion, which burns up all desires of the flesh. The hissing snakes represent the turbulent senses. Shiva has conquered them fully, and so the snakes, instead of biting him, form themselves into a beautiful garland around his neck and thus serve to glorify his self-conquest. The ashes with which Shiva besmears himself stand for his burned-up desires.⁵

The Abstract in the Concrete

With two eyes Kali sees the temporal world and with the third the transcendental Reality. A blood smeared sword and severed head in her left hands indicates the victory of spirit over matter. She has two distinctive features: one terrible and another benevolent. She is terrible to those who insist on swimming against the stream of her laws. And she is affectionate to those who strive to unite with her. 'Where the ignorant man sees the sword hanging above his own neck, his enlightened counterpart finds it pointed at the deadly enemies on the road to spiritual development—lust, greed, pride, and the rest of the demonic brood. The severed head that Kali holds in Her lower left hand is a token of Her invincible success in defeating the demons of our egoism.'⁶

Her other two hands—the right ones—are in the gestures of *abhaya*, offering fearlessness, and *vara*, granting boons, to her dear ones. Kali wears a garland of skulls representing the Sanskrit alphabet. The seeds of a new cycle germinate with the arising of maiden words in her cosmic mind, composed of the alphabet in her memory. A girdle of severed hands necessary to start creation afresh drapes her waist. Her mass

of black flowing hair is the continuous drift of events with time. Her one foot is on the heart of Shiva—Kala, the master of time—and the other still in midair. Shiva looks on; to him, she—all black and beautiful—is repeating his name on the skulls used as beads.

‘Kali has been executing a wild dance of carnage. On all sides She has left evidences of Her reign of terror.’⁷ Sister Nivedita delineates her idea about Kali thus: ‘Suddenly She has stepped unwittingly on the body of Her Husband. Her foot is on His breast, He has looked up, awakened by that touch, and They are gazing into each other’s eyes. Her right hands are raised in involuntary blessing, and Her tongue makes an exaggerated gesture of shyness and surprise, once common to Indian women of the villages’ (471–2).

In Sri Ramakrishna’s view, Kali plays in different ways:

It is She alone who is known as Maha-Kali, Nitya-Kali, Shmashana-Kali, Raksha-Kali, and Shyama-Kali. ... When there were neither the creation, nor the sun, the moon, the planets, and the earth, and when darkness was enveloped in darkness, then Mother, the Formless One, Maha-Kali, the Great Power, was one with Maha-Kala, the Absolute.

Shyama-Kali has a somewhat tender aspect ... She is the Dispenser of boons and the Dispeller of fear. People worship Raksha-Kali, the Protectress, in times of epidemic, famine, earthquake, drought, and flood. Shmashana-Kali is the embodiment of the power of destruction. ... After the destruction of the universe, at the end of a great cycle, the Divine Mother garners the seeds for the next creation. ... She brings forth this phenomenal world and then pervades it. ... God is the container of the universe and also what is contained in it.⁸

The saint Ramprasad shows it best by his enchanting hymn on Kali:

Who is there that can understand
what Mother Kali is?
Even the six darshanas are powerless
to reveal Her.
It is She, the scriptures say,
that is the Inner Self
Of the yogi, who in Self
discovers all his joy;
She that, of Her own sweet will,
inhabits every living thing.

The macrocosm and microcosm rest
in the Mother’s womb;
Now do you see how vast it is?
In the Muladhara
The yogi meditates on Her,
and in the Sahasrara:
Who but Shiva has beheld Her
as She really is?
Within the lotus wilderness She sports
beside Her Mate, the Swan.

When man aspires to understand Her,
Ramprasad must smile;
To think of knowing Her, he says,
is quite as laughable
As to imagine one can swim across
the boundless sea.
But while my mind has understood, alas!
My heart has not;
Though but a dwarf, it still would strive to
make a captive of the moon (106).

Kali is arguably the most fascinating symbol of God and his activity. Such a comprehensive combination of philosophy, poetry, art, and spirituality is very rarely seen. No wonder then that a casual observer is baffled by her overwhelming Reality. Sri Ramakrishna says, ‘God cannot be realized through mere scholarly reasoning’ (ibid.).

Sri Ramakrishna realized God as Kali with nothing but intense longing. To him, Kali was Brahman. He declared:

That which is Brahman is also Kali, the Mother, the Primal Energy. When inactive It is called Brahman. Again, when creating, preserving, and destroying, It is called Shakti. Still water is an illustration of Brahman. The same water, moving in waves, may be compared to Shakti, Kali. What is the meaning of Kali? She who communes with Maha-Kala, the Absolute, is Kali. She is formless and, again, She has forms' (634).

Sri Ramakrishna continues: 'If you meditate on any aspect of Her with firm conviction, She would let one know Her true nature' (ibid.). Sri Ramakrishna disliked dogmatism and the attempt to limit God by saying that God is only this and not that: 'How can man with his one ounce of intelligence know the real nature of God?' (ibid.).

Swami Nikhilananda nicely describes Kali in his introduction to the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*:

She is Prakriti, the Procreatrix, Nature, the Destroyer, the Creator. Nay, She is something greater and deeper still for those who have eyes to see. She is the Universal Mother, 'my Mother' as Ramakrishna would say, the All-powerful, who reveals Herself to Her children under different aspects and Divine Incarnations, the Visible God, who leads the elect to Invisible Reality; and if it so pleases Her, She takes away the last trace of ego from created beings and merges it in the consciousness of the Absolute, the undifferentiated God (9–10).

This is the mysterious Kali, both principle and person. When approached with devotion she reveals the Reality behind the mystery. ☪



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Yoga-sahaya Sri Ramakrishna

Swami Vyomananda

SPEAKING OR WRITING about Sri Ramakrishna is like going to the ocean with a small cup and trying to fill it with the whole ocean. While one knows that one has not brought the ocean in the cup but just a small quantity of it, similarly, one's efforts cannot encompass Sri Ramakrishna in his totality; yet, one can know a small part of him. There is a deep divine meaning in everything Sri Ramakrishna did and said, and understanding even a small part of it will confer liberation. As he has said: 'If a jug of water is enough to remove my thirst, why should I measure the quantity of water in a lake? I become drunk on even half a bottle of wine—what is the use of my calculating the quantity of liquor in a tavern?'¹ However, the little one can understand about God should be free from errors and misconceptions. Sri Krishna says in the Bhagavadgita: 'He who truly knows the divine birth and actions of

Mine, does not get rebirth after casting off the body. He attains Me, O Arjuna.'²

To know Sri Ramakrishna's birth and actions truly, *tattvatah*, 'as they are in reality',³ one needs to turn also to the Holy Mother and his apostles. They are the greatest help in 'truly' understanding Sri Ramakrishna. The whole mission of Swami Vivekananda was nothing but throwing a floodlight on his guru. In his vesper hymn to Sri Ramakrishna 'Khandana-bhava-bandhana', Swamiji has called Sri Ramakrishna, *yoga-sahaya*, helper in yoga. Only God can be *yoga-sahaya*, and that is why Swamiji uses another significant word: *jagadishvara*, God of the universe. The Gita calls God *yogeshvara*, God of yogas.⁴ This *yogeshvara* says:

I imparted this imperishable yoga to Vivasvan. Vivasvan taught this to Manu, and Manu transmitted this to Ikshvaku. The king-sages knew

this (yoga) which was received thus in regular succession. That yoga, O destroyer of foes, is now lost owing to a long lapse of time. That ancient yoga itself, which is this, has been taught to you by me today, considering that you are my devotee and friend. For, this (yoga) is a profound secret (4.1–3).

Thus, the God of yoga incarnates as a world teacher in different ages. This time God has incarnated as Sri Ramakrishna, who not only taught but also practised yoga and transmitted it to Swamiji, who in turn taught it to the world. One of the aspects of Sri Ramakrishna's mission was to clarify and simplify yoga, so much so that he defines yoga in very simple terms: 'Generally speaking there are two kinds of yoga: karma-yoga and manoyoga, that is to say, union with God through work and through the mind.'⁵ Strangely, though all beings are always united with God, all beings have forgotten this fact and live in darkness. We know everything through this 'union with God', but we do not know God. Joining minds consciously to our source is then yoga.

Revealing God through Yoga

While meeting people, travelling, singing, talking, laughing, dancing, joking, touching, being silent—at all times Sri Ramakrishna was opening the heart of people to God; he was revealing God to everyone. Sri Ramakrishna did this spontaneously because his every action proceeded from the state of yoga. He was constantly in yoga, immersed in the Divine, and thus all his actions became divine. This divinity, this yoga, he spread. Those in his proximity kept looking intently at him, losing all sense of time, place, and other worldly things and becoming immersed in his rapturous being, swimming in the highest bliss. What was happening then was later explained in different ways, but

they were immersed in the highest yoga. The *jagadishvara*, who is also the *yuga-ishvara*, God of the age, being merged in yoga helps others to also merge in yoga. In this tremendous manner he was *yoga-sahaya*, and this work is still being continued. Looking at his own photograph, Sri Ramakrishna said: 'This represents a high yogic state. This form will be worshipped in every home as time goes on.'⁶

This all-powerful avatara has another quality: he cannot withdraw from devotees the form he has once manifested to them. Hence, Sri Ramakrishna sparkles in the hearts of millions of his devotees, at present all over the world; and how wonderfully their lives are being transformed. Sri Ramakrishna had not to argue with the non-believer or blast the agnostic or smash the atheist to prove that God exists. He simply said: 'I see God'. On rare occasions he also declared to a fortunate few that he was God. He assured everyone that God can be seen directly. And if one argued against his words, he had to simply touch that person. It was that simple. Other times it was done even more easily: a touch was not necessary, a look or a wish was enough to set the kundalini rising and transforming the consciousness. One may not have been a pure-hearted seeker, but to Sri Ramakrishna such a one was just a *viyukta*, removed from yoga, and as the *yoga-sahaya* he was, his work was to bring such a one back to the path of yoga.

To preach God and yoga Sri Ramakrishna did not frame suffocating rules. His joy was so great in his communion with God that one became simply drawn to grab and experience that joy. He was never dull; if he hated anything in the world it was monotony in spiritual life. To him yoga was to be somehow in touch with God, even by pushing and shoving your way through.

'As many opinions, so many paths.' He revealed to humanity that God can be approached

through a variety of ways, and that each one is true, provided one is sincere on one's path. He loved everyone more than we do ourselves. This was the most powerful secret of being *yoga-sahaya*. Girish Ghosh said: 'I do not know what the scriptures say about God, but I believe that if Sri Ramakrishna was able to love me as he did in the same way that I love myself, then he must be God. He loved me in this way. I never had a true friend; but *he* is one because he transformed my faults into virtues. In a way, I feel he loved me *more* than I loved myself.'⁷

Sri Ramakrishna loved everybody; had he not done so, he could have simply said, 'come only this way to God, or go away!' He never condemned anyone; he simply said: 'come, just come; come any way that is suited to you.' Hence, yoga has become such a delight in Sri Ramakrishna's teachings; his yoga is not a straining of the nerves. Loving God is the only essential thing, and who can love in duress? Love springs spontaneously when exposure to God takes place in a holy atmosphere. This is what Sri Ramakrishna provided to the world—an atmosphere of purity where nothing was as real as God and his love. What will you gain by merely torturing your body and blowing through your nose and looking like a piece of dry wood? Open your heart. Be simple, expand your consciousness, and discard crookedness. Be straight and true in your dealings, be up and doing, and above all, go forward. Ask with a voice of thunder and you will obtain an infinite shower of grace. Yoga is not lumbago and a long face. God is bliss. Sri Ramakrishna was a mart of joy. This is the new religion, the new yoga of the age. Because he is *yoga-sahaya* he could effortlessly keep people's minds focused on him.

Hundreds of monks and householders came to him. He met all: adepts in yoga, the stragglers, and even those who never cared for yoga. Apart from the general atmosphere he provided for

awakening people, he also took special care to see that nobody's *bhava*, attitude, was disturbed. He wanted everyone to tread his or her own path, and accordingly he gave instructions to individual needs and capacity. Only a *jagadishvara*, who is a *yoga-sahaya*, can do this.


Sri Ramakrishna embodied as a human with human limitations, yet he effortlessly moved to the highest state of yoga and descended back to his simple and trusting nature. This has made it possible for humankind to understand its highest state. This knowledge will bring dignity to human life and proper direction as well. No more groping and crawling in circles due to human ignorance. Humankind needs no longer be afraid of its weaknesses, excesses, shadows, and miseries. Sri Ramakrishna has shown that humanity is essentially divine. Sri Ramakrishna not only proved God to humankind, he equally and forcefully proved that the human condition is the highest one; through it one can storm the citadel of God, tear the veil of maya, and verily become Brahman. Thus, thanks to Sri Ramakrishna humankind has regained its lost glory. He also showed that devotees can make God run to look after them through the power of their love. Sri Ramakrishna himself did a lot of running about to meet and help devotees, and he even pined for them. Moreover, he showed that God loves humans so much that he becomes one of us to love us as a human. This is another proof that Sri Ramakrishna is *yoga-sahaya*. He has brought yoga home to us both ways: God to human beings and human beings to God. One does not know for whom he wept more, whether for Kali or for his devotees. As a human he wept for God and as an avatara he wept for humankind.

Love is the Essence of Yoga

The teachings on yoga and the disciplines it demands frighten many. But how simply the *yoga-sahaya* gives us the essence of yoga:

‘At the time of meditation,’ said the Master to the devotees who believed that God had forms, ‘think that you have tied with a silk thread your mind to the lotus feet of your chosen form of God, so that your mind may not stray away from there. Why do I say “silk thread”? Because, those lotus feet are indeed very soft and delicate. They will be hurt if any other kind of string is used.’ He would sometimes say, ‘Should one think of the chosen Ideal at the time of meditation only and then forget Him at other times? You should always keep a part of the mind attached to Him. You must surely have noticed that a sacrificial lamp has to be lighted at the time of the worship of Durga. That light should always be kept burning near the deity, it should not be allowed to go out. If it does, it augurs ill for the householder. Even so, after the chosen Ideal is brought and seated on the lotus of the heart, the sacrificial lamp of meditation on Him should always be kept burning. While one is engaged in worldly duties, one should watch at intervals whether the lamp is burning within or not.’⁸

We have not only Sri Ramakrishna’s teachings, we also have a stupendous amount of *sahayata*, help, from the teachings of Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, and other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna—all instruments of the *yoga-sahaya*. By being so simple and lovable Sri Ramakrishna has made yoga such an easy and homely affair. For when one is incapable of meditation, one can obtain everything by just remembering him. He said: ‘We should force our demands on God. He is our Father and Mother, isn’t He? If the son demands his patrimony and gives up food and drink in order to enforce his demand, then the parents hand his share over to him.’⁹ Girish Ghosh says: ‘I find that it is not difficult to obey him, love him, and worship him. But, indeed, it is difficult to forget him.’¹⁰ *Yoga-sahaya* Sri Ramakrishna has

made yoga spontaneous and inevitable in everyone’s life for this age. One just needs a cup of devotion and proceed to Sri Ramakrishna, who is the ocean of love. 

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In deep silence, the ecstatic lovers meditate together on the mystery of complete Divine Expression, this mystery which we see embodied directly before us as Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Gracefully clearing away the accumulated weight of religious inhibitions, regulations, and distortions, the avatara mysteriously descends to make spiritual progress swift, sure, and easy for many, not just for a few. The avatara is not an individual soul and therefore does not seek to attain liberation, but descends again and again to open the way of liberation from self, to become a sublime object of worship and adoration for countless conscious beings who are awakening and evolving.

—Lex Hixon, *Great Swan*, 174–5

Significance of the Term Putra in Vedic Literature

Kamalika Mazumder

THE VEDAS REVEAL a gradual evolution of thought from the earlier to the later Vedic period. This becomes obvious while studying the changes in meaning that certain Sanskrit terms have undergone all through. *Putra* is one of those terms. Vedic commentators, such as Skandaswami and Sayana, hold *putra* to mean 'son'. But if we venture deep and analyse the context in which the word has been used, we find much broader meanings, which drastically changes our reading of Vedic civilization and character.

Varied Meanings

The Puranas and Smritis explain *putra* by splitting the disyllabic word: *tra*, to procure or rescue, from *put*, hell—a very important task to be accomplished by a son. Durgacharya, a medieval commentator on Yaska's *Nirukta*, explains *putra* as *puruṇo vahunaḥ pāpatrāyate* or *puru trāyate putra*,¹ meaning one who performs the obsequial rites of the father and releases him from sins. This is further illustrated by Durgacharya, who uses the word *nīparan*, oblations to the deceased—ancestors—to release them from *naraka*, hell, called *pum*. The *Manu Smṛiti* suggests: 'Punnāmno narakādyasmātrāyate pitarāṃ sutāḥ tasmāt putra iti proktaḥ syayameva syayambhuvā; as the son saves his father from the hell named *pum*, for that very reason Brahma himself has called him *putra*.'² Therefore, *putra* has been split into *put* + *tra* + *a(tr)*.

The Vedic Samhitas give the following syno-

nyms of *putra*: *tanaya*, belonging to one's own family, son, offspring, child; *toka*, grandson, offspring, children, race, child; *sūnu*, son, child, offspring; and *apatya*, offspring, child, descendant. These synonyms give the term *putra* a different and independent etymological meaning and usage. *Putra* has been used quite frequently in the four Samhitas, and in each case it is observed that it is used either in the narrow sense of 'child' or in the broader sense of 'all living beings', sometimes even referring to the entire creation. When *putra* is used as 'child', it encompasses both the male as well as the female child in the most unambiguous manner.

Another point is that the concept of *naraka* is absent in the Vedas. According to Sayana's commentary of *padmajanatā gabhīram*³ in the Rig Veda, deep holes produced by the walking of ill-natured people are viewed as *naraka*. Nowhere else in Vedic literature do we come across the usual concept or the term *naraka*. Hence, in this context it means that men and women, by their ill-character and deeds, fall into holes or traps, which signify insuperable circumstances created by themselves. The entire Vedic literature is noticeable in its efforts to free an individual from *agha*, *pāpa*, *nirṛti*—all pointing to the idea of impurity and imperfection. Eternal damnation is not a Vedic conception. In the *Isha Upanishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda a marked distinction is made between the destination of a person possessing *avidya*, ignorance, and of one with *vidya*, knowledge.⁴ The person with *avidya* is bereft of

discrimination, which is synonymous with darkness. For the Upanishad, being barred from the highest goal is darkness, but the persons concerned obtain the worldly pleasures they desire. Even persons having *vidya* about sacrifices or who are worshippers of the gods enter into a state that is a hindrance to absolute knowledge.

Thus, in the *Katha Upanishad*, when Nachiketa noticed his father performing the sacrifice improperly, he mused that his father might go to a joyless world, *anandāḥ nāma te lokāḥ*.⁵ The notion of a punishment in hell for a worldly person is a concept found in later literary works. In Vedic literature we find the transmigration of souls to impermanent higher or lower levels according to their karma; this is especially prominent in the Upanishads. The term *puruṭra* occurs many times in the Vedas; it means *puru-trāyate*, the saviour of many, a meaning that in no case occurs in the context of the term *putra*. So Durgacharya's version of *putra* as *puru trāyate putra* cannot be accepted as the Vedic meaning of the term.

Putra, Male or Female

In the *Mahanarayana Upanishad*, a text which is considered to be a part of the Krishna Yajur Veda, we find mention of human organs that are to be purified before taking an oath of celibacy. The verse is as follows:

*Śirahpāṇipādapāśvarprṣṭhorudara-
jaṅghāśiśnopasthāpayavo;
Me śudhyantām jyotirrahamaṁ
virajā vipāpmā bhuyāsam svāhā.*

By this oblation may the limbs and the parts of my body comprised by the head, hands, feet, sides, back, thighs, belly, shanks, the generative organ, the middle part of the body, and the anus become purified. I pray that I become the Supreme Light bereft of all obstructing sins

and their cause, the passions in me. For this end may this oblation be offered into the consecrated fire.⁶

In the above mantra *śiśna* and *upastha* appear side by side. The former word denotes the male organ of generation and the latter that of the female. This may imply that the pronouncer of the formula may belong to one or the other sex (275). Before performing this *homa*, sacrifice, both males and females undertake a *śrāddha*, obsequial rite. Thus, the performance of the rites for the benefit of one's deceased parents before the *virajā homa* is the work of a *putra*, either male or female. In the literature anterior to the *Mahanarayana Upanishad* the allusion to both the sexes with the term *putra* was common.

In a Sama Veda mantra, which is also found in the Rig Veda, we come across 'Sa jāyase mathyamānah saho mahat tvāmāhuh sahaputramangirah; you are generated, being churned with great force, therefore they have called you *angirah*,'⁷ which suggests that Agni, who was lurking in a cave or a forest in the form of *angirāḥ*, came into contact with a physical force, and this churning or friction led to the procreation of fire, *agni*. Therefore, *agni* is called *sahaputra*, the child of force. That Agni is present in the womb of *araṇi* and comes out as the *putra angirāḥ*. Unfortunately the original meaning of the root word *put* is not available, but as can be deduced from the Vedas the original meaning of this root word was 'to procreate'.

In the *Ashtadhyayi* of Panini, the earliest extant grammatical treatise, we come across the word *putrī*, daughter. This word, however, is not found in Vedic literature. In fact, the single word *putra* is used to denote both male and female offspring. This is so because in the special case of a male offspring the terms used were



pum̐sa putraḥ or *pumān putraḥ*. Kumkum Roy, an eminent historian, implies that the term *putra* means 'son'; accordingly she says that in the Atharva Veda

the focus on the *garbha* or embryo was at least apparently gender neutral. However, this possibility was almost immediately circumscribed, in situations where the ideal embryo was expected to culminate in the birth of the *putra* or son. This was expressed in several ways: in one instance, deities were invoked to transfer the birth of women elsewhere, and ensure the desired male birth for the invoker. ... In fact, ideally, men were thought to generate men. ... In a prayer devised for a woman who wished for a husband, the ultimate ideal was that she would give birth to many sons and thus become a *mahiṣī*, chief wife. This was reiterated in the marriage hymn, where it was hoped that the bride would possess good sons (*suputra*).⁸

But this theory cannot be accepted, because words like *pum̐sa putraḥ* negate the above conclusions. Some historians have even adduced that the expression *pum̐sa putraḥ* means 'a man among his fellows or sons'. These conclusions do not really stand and are mere guess work; they drift from the original and simple meaning of *pum̐sa putraḥ*, which is 'male offspring'.

In the *Kaushitaki Brahmana Upanishad* the father transfers his senses, enjoyment, dalliance, and offspring into his *putra*,⁹ an act which is a feature of the *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad* as well. The father was believed to have more of a biological role in the birth of a child than the mother. The role of the mother was to give both physical and philosophical support to the child after its birth. Later in this article we have tried to throw some light upon the mother cult formed by Dyavaprithivi—Rodasi—Aditi, and Saraswati in the Rig Veda. Yajñavalkya says to Maitreyi that it is not for the sake of *putraḥ*, sons,

themselves that they are loved, but for the sake of our own selves, and necessity makes us see ourselves in them and consequently adore them.¹⁰

In the same Upanishad the desire for the birth of a *panditā duhitā*, learned daughter, is expressed along with the desire for a *pandita putra*, learned son (6.4.17–18). Many have taken the word *putra* here to mean a male son. However, in the succeeding verse the desire for a *pum̐sa putra*, male child, and the necessary rituals for obtaining such a child, is stated very clearly (6.4.20). Therefore, *duhitā*, the female who milks a cow, may or may not be a daughter, though by doing one of the major functions of those days she formed an important part of society. While a prayer for a learned *duhitā* is undoubtedly a longing for a learned female, a learned *putra* marks a child in general, including both the male and female offspring wished for in the *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad* mantra. Moreover, the fact that the desire for a male offspring is mentioned separately reinforces that *putra* means only a child, who can be either male or female. This Upanishad also defines *putra* as a child who fills the vacuum left by or completes the unfinished tasks of the parent, and as a result of that act the parent goes to the desired higher world (1.5.17). A dead parent is resurrected in his *putra*, so to say, through speech, mind, and *prana* and thus becomes immortal. We can also say that the *putra* is procreated, *put*, and the one who rescues, *trā*, the parents from the limited bodily existence making them immortal.

Relatively later, in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, appears the famous verse '*Śṛṇvantu viśve amṛtasya putrā ā ye dhāmāni divyāni tasthuḥ*'.¹¹ Swami Vivekananda translates it as: 'Hear, ye children [*putrā*] of immortal bliss! Even ye that reside in higher spheres!'¹² This shows that at the time of the Upanishads, even the later ones, the term *putra* meant child.

It is interesting to note that in the genealogy of the seers, as presented in the *Bṛihadaran-yaka Upanishad*, the teachers are introduced as descendants of their mothers. For example: Pautimashiputra received knowledge from Katyayaniputra; Katyayaniputra received it from Gautamiputra; Gautamiputra received it from Bharadvajiputra; Bharadvajiputra received it from Parashariputra; Parashariputra received knowledge from Aupasvastiputra; Aupasvastiputra received it from another Parashariputra; Parashariputra received it from another Katyayaniputra; Katyayaniputra received knowledge from Kaushikiputra; and the list goes on.¹³

As mentioned before the father's role in the procreative process was recognised to be more active than the mother's. But in the *Bṛihadaran-yaka Upanishad* this matrilineal succession does not refute the earlier patrilineal tie of biological nature found in the Samhitas, which highlights the father as the source of procreation. Because the formation of the embryo takes place in the *garbhakośa*, womb, the ancestry and the lineage of gurus and seers owe more to mothers. After the birth of a *putra* the father was supposed to brighten up the sacred fire and place the child in his lap; he would offer oblations to Agni with a prayer: 'Growing up in this home of mine, may I maintain a thousand people. May (the goddess of fortune) never depart with children and animals from his line! Svaha. The vital force that is in me I mentally transfer to you' (6.4.24). Next, the child being transferred to its mother to be suckled, praying to Saraswati and imploring the goddess to bestow on this mother the constant flow of her milk for the nourishment of worthy people (6.4.27).

The earthly mother is epitomized as Saraswati—the goddess of intellect, speech, wisdom, and fine arts. Therefore, in the Upanishadic genealogy the mother-child philosophical tie

is celebrated. Thus, the mere act of producing children is raised from a sheer biological level to a metaphysical one, in which the roles of the father and mother are equally balanced and recognized—in this context we may very well refer back to Saraswati as *ambitame*, best of mothers, and *devitame*, best of goddesses, in the Rig Veda.¹⁴ Hence, the matrilineal chain does not get diverted from the tradition of the Samhitas.

In the Upanishadic genealogy presented above it is understood that both males and females are regarded as teachers, seers. In the post-Mauryan Buddhist and Jaina inscriptions, particularly from Mathura, we do come across female teachers who are nuns and participate in the construction of religious tablets, images, and *vihāras*, monasteries. But in their genealogy of teachers we do not find a male pupil of a female teacher. On the other hand, in the Upanishads we have the example of the rishi Kashyapa, who received knowledge from Vak, a female sage of the Vedic literature who in turn received knowledge from another female sage, Ambhini.¹⁵

In another example we find that Sanjiviputra received knowledge from the female sage Mandukayani (6.5.4). In the list of Vedic teachers found in the *Bṛihadaran-yaka Upanishad* we do not know the male-female ratio, but it is quite certain that even learned females were free to teach male pupils. Swami Vivekananda, in his famous lecture on 'Hinduism' at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, says: 'The discoverers of these [Vedic spiritual] laws are called Rishis, and we honour them as perfected beings. I am glad to tell this audience that some of the very greatest of them were women.'¹⁶ 'There is no valid reason to doubt that some of the *Rig Vedic* hymns were actually composed by women. Lopāmudrā, Apālā, Vishwavārā, Sikatā, Nivāvarī, and Ghoshā are some of the famous women whose names have been preserved in later literature.'¹⁷

According to Kshitimohan Sen Shastri, preference for the male child was dominant in Vedic times,¹⁸ and according to many others, Rig Vedic society was patriarchal in nature, the head of the family being the man and not his wife (*ibid.*). When we trace the meaning of the term *putra* as ‘child’, both male or female, we have a completely different view of the socio-economic-psychological history of the Vedic Aryans. In fact, it exposes the broad outlook of the Vedic Aryans and negates the recent theory that women even in the early Vedic age were subordinated and marginalized. We do not want to go by the antiquarian paradigm of a glorious Vedic society as it is critically referred to by the opposing school, for no age is flawless. But we would definitely like to suggest that the condition of women was much better and happier in the Vedic times than in other periods of Indian history. Both girls and boys used to study together in the *gurukula*, home of the guru, and had *upanayana*, sacred thread initiation, at an early age.

Putra becomes *putta* in the Pali language, which predates the Puranas. In Latin the word undergoes a change and is called *putlo*, which further evolves into *pullus*, and does not denote a son or a male but the young of an animal or bird. The French word is *pou*, and in Lithuanian the word becomes *pitytis*, meaning also the young of an animal or bird. In Greek it is *pai* and means a child.¹⁹ This commonality in the meaning of the word *putra* in different languages suggests its ancient broader meaning as ‘child’ or a ‘young one’.

Putra in the Rig Veda

As enunciated before *putra* in the Rig Veda



Upanayana ceremony

means ‘child’. If this proposition and ultimate definition is applied to every instance in the Rig Veda, the patriarchal alignment of the Rig Vedic Aryans is put to doubt and is transformed from the particular desire for a male child into the want for children in general. From John Muir (1810–82) and Albrecht Weber (1825–1901) to contemporary historians all have treated *putra* as ‘son’. We will examine some of the instances where this term is used and discover its true meaning.

In the prayer to the Maruts, the sage Kanva begs for protection while the father holds the *putra* in his arms.²⁰ The father, irrespective of the child being male or female, holds not his son in particular but his *putra*. As children, *putrāḥ*, sit on their mother’s lap, likewise the gods are asked to settle upon the summit of the sacred grass—during a sacrifice (7.43.3). As a frog calls out to others at the coming of the rains, so does a *putra* with its prattle goes to its father (7.103.3). Soma the kinsman (of the gods) is enveloped in the investing filter, like a child in the arms of its protecting parents (9.101.14). As a *putra* supports its

parents, so Agni is asked to fill the sky and earth with light (10.1.7). As the father and mother are related to and protective towards the *putra*, the two Ashvins are asked to protect the sacrifice, prays the seer Bhutamsha (10.106.4). As the father and mother protect the *putra*, so the Ashvins after drinking the soma juice had protected Indra by their wonderful deeds (10.131.5). The sound of lightning is like a cow lowing for its calf, *vatsam* (1.38.8). Danu, the mother of Vritra, who is slain by Indra, 'slept like a cow with its *vatsā*, calf' (1.32.9). *Vatsah* means calf, the young of an animal, son, term of endearment, and also offspring and children in general. In the Rig Veda the gods Brahmanaspati and Indra are called sons of strength or power (1.40.2, 1.62.9, 8.90.2). Agni is also stated to be *sahasaputra*, the son of strength or attrition (2.7.6). The twin pieces of *araṇi*, wood, are sometimes stated to be the two mothers of Agni (1.112.4), or the father and mother of Agni (10.31.10). Agni is also the child of Vayu (1.112.4) who, on attrition with the two pieces of *araṇi*—within which Agni is already existent—gives birth to Agni (3.29.3). Through these verses we understand that Agni is a *pumānsam* (3.29.13) or a male infant. The ten sisters—fingers—unwedded and united, together grasp the baby, the new-born infant. Through the father comes the seed necessary for the birth of a child, and the child Agni in turn is said to become the father of the gods (1.69.1), because the luminous Agni makes the entry and the presence—or visibility—of the gods possible among men. The child, in one instance, is desired to be like father Agni (1.31.11), to uphold the importance and glory of the fire god who is a part of the male principle.

(To be continued)

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11. *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, 2.5.
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13. See *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 6.5.1–4.
14. Rig Veda, 2.42.16.
15. *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 6.5.3.
16. *Complete Works*, 1.7.
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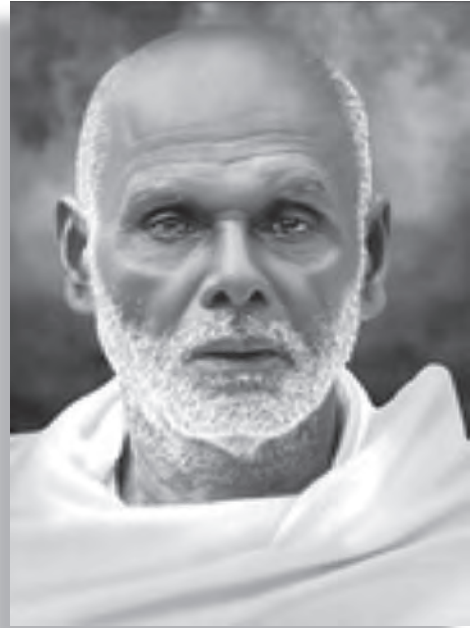
Sri Narayana Guru's Idea of the Absolute

Dr D Nirmala Devi

SRI NARAYANA GURU WAS a saint, poet, prophet, and a social reformer of India who lived in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. His message is the ancient message of the land pertaining to values that lead to perennial wisdom. The uniqueness of Sri Narayana Guru's life and teachings lies in it having a distinct dimension oriented towards the betterment of society.¹ Having come from the land of Acharya Shankara, Sri Narayana Guru was a great proponent and re-evaluator of Advaita Vedanta. The Guru's philosophy, which is fundamentally Advaita, further extended the non-dual principles into practical modes of self-realization through spiritual education, compassion, and peaceful coexistence of humanity, at the same time promoting social equality and universal brotherhood.

Sri Narayana Guru appeared on the Indian philosophical scene about eleven centuries after Acharya Shankara. Advaita Vedanta was in danger of losing itself in the tangle of pedantry and dry logic, and the Guru's mission was to make a revolution not just in Advaita Vedanta but in all the preceding philosophies. Nataraja Guru, the distinguished disciple of Sri Narayana Guru, writes: 'The Guru Narayana strove to reevaluate all these contributory factors in the life of the country conserving all former revaluation in a supremely generous synthesis of Advaitic vision.'²

Sri Narayana Guru was a product of trad-



itional Indian wisdom and has also contributed greatly to its dissemination. Most of the philosophical works of Sri Narayana Guru are unfortunately not available today. Of the sixty works that were recorded and published, the most relevant to the basic understanding of the Guru's philosophy are: *Atmopadesha Shatakam*, 'A Hundred Verses of Instructions on the Self'; *Advaita Dipika*, 'Lamp of Non-dual Wisdom'; *Chit-Jada Chintamani*, 'Reflections on Consciousness and Matter'; and *Arivu*, 'Fifteen Verses of Knowledge'—all these in Malayalam; and *Brahma Vidya Panchakam*, 'Five Verses on the Knowledge of Brahman', and *Darshana Mala*, 'Garland of Visions', in Sanskrit.

Metaphysics of Integration

In the first four verses of the *Atmopadesha Shatakam* Sri Narayana Guru gives his idea of the Absolute and its intrinsic relationship with the phenomenal world. The phenomenal manifestation is presented as a dialectical binary principle operating between the subject and the object, both emanating from a single

noumenal substance. Nataraja Guru has given a brief explanation:

The Absolute is not a thing nor is it a mere idea. When the philosopher has correctly located in a paradox lurking between appearance and reality, the paradox itself tends to be abolished in the Absolute. The Absolute is a neutral notion in which all real things and all possible ideas about them can be comprised without contradiction or conflict. Thus, it is both a thing and an idea at once. Truth, reality, fact or existence refers to aspects of this central neutral notion, named for convenience the Absolute.³

The Absolute would be truly absolute only when it absorbs the relative into itself. Such absorption is achieved by bringing together incompatible terms on an equal status to arrive at a *samanvaya*, unity, by the well-known technique recognized in philosophy as the dialectical methodology. The dual factors that may be integrated by this method include truth and supposition, spirit and matter, contemplation and action, unity and multiplicity, conception and perception, and so on.

In the opening verse of the *Atmopadesha Shatakam* Sri Narayana Guru teaches:

Permeating the knowledge
which brilliantly shines
At once within and without the knower
Is the *karu*; to that,
with the five senses withheld,
Prostrate again and again
with devotion and chant.⁴

The key word in the verse is *karu*, which is to be ultimately understood as the Absolute, the primeval Cause, the universal Self, and 'nature that is naturing'. The literal meaning of the word *karu* is 'mould'. Human beings come from a mould that has in it the blueprint of the chromosomes.

An effect has a mould—its cause. The mould of an actualization is its potential. The mould of knowledge is consciousness. The mould of articulated thoughts is language. Word is the mould of energy and is the law that controls and directs it. Thus, everything in this world, ranging from the subtlest to the grossest, has its own corresponding mould. The generalization of all of these is called *karu*. *Karu* is both definable and indefinable.

Sri Narayana Guru brings cosmological factors and psychological elements to the central unity of an all encompassing knowledge, *arivu*. What Guru calls *arivu* comes very close to what Karl Jaspers describes as 'wholeness of ideas'.⁵ Sri Narayana Guru raises *arivu* to the status of the Absolute. As counterparts of dialectical situation, subject and object cancel each other out. Consequently, we arrive at a notion of the indescribable, which is at once immanent as well as transcendent. 'Thing-ness' and 'knowledge' become synonymous and exchangeable. The fourth verse of *Atmopadesha Shatakam* thus brings the quaternion of the four limbs of the Absolute to the epistemological finality where the unspeakable 'fourth' culminates in the silence that follows the secret syllable *aum*. Verse four of *Atmopadesha Shatakam* reads:

Knowledge, the object of interest, and one's personal knowledge, are nothing other than *mahas*; merging into that infinite, Supreme Knowledge, become That alone.⁶

In this verse one faces three epistemological problems of importance. First, one should know what prompts the mind to move from one object of interest to another. Second, how do the latent urges get into consciousness?—in the verse the Guru traces their origin to *mahas*, primeval stuff. Third, why is consciousness fragmented into the knower, the known, and knowledge? From the

second part of the verse we can deduce that a dispersion of interest causes the fragmentation of consciousness.

For a comprehensive examination of knowledge it is better to go through his work *Arivu*, which is an analytic and synthetic appraisal of knowledge. The first verse of *Arivu* reads as follows:

This which is known here is none other
On reflection; knowledge it becomes
As knowledge is one with this ever.
Naught else there is but knowledge alone.⁷


What impresses one in knowledge is the mark of the known. The known is experiential both as objective factors outside one's body and as a subjective consciousness consisting of feelings, cognition, and volition within one's own body-mind complex. As the outside objective world is mainly comprehended by one's sense organs, and the external factors are manipulated by organs of action, the knowledge of such objects seems to be more distinct than the subjective notion experienced within oneself. A close analysis of the processes of knowledge reveals that from the periphery of consciousness to the centre of consciousness there is nothing but one stretch of knowledge. Therefore, in the first verse of *Arivu* Sri Narayana Guru denotes the subject matter of the discussion to be knowledge. He assigns to it the dignity and status of the Absolute, the one without a second.

In his *Arivu*, Sri Narayana Guru categorically establishes that everything belongs to knowledge. The Guru has no objection to consider earth and so forth as emanation of the one knowledge, outside of which nothing exists. In verse thirty-three of *Atmopadesha Shatakam* Guru writes:

Knowledge, to know its own nature here,
Has become earth and the other elements,

Spiralling up, back and turning round,
Like a glowing twig it is ever turning.⁸

Sri Narayana Guru, while maintaining Acharya Shankara's monism and defending the principle of *anirvachaniya*, indefinability, also gives attention to Madhavacharya's philosophy of difference, pluralism, and relation. In the *Atmopadesha Shatakam* the Guru shows in what capacity difference can be accommodated and under what circumstances all difference have to give way to absolute unity.

For the Advaita Vedantin the goal is moksha. Merging both subjective and objective consciousness into primal knowledge and thereby losing one's identity in it is the ultimate liberation. This is the purpose of the higher form of reflection and philosophy of Sri Narayana Guru. 

Notes and References

1. It is known that during his wanderings, Swami Vivekananda met Chattampi Swami, a renowned saint and guru of Sri Narayana Guru at Ernakulam, Kerala. For details see His Eastern and Western Disciples, *Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 2 vols (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2008), 1.327.
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Swami Vivekananda in India's Supreme Court Judgements

Mohana Suryanarayanan

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA BELONGED to a family of legal professionals. His great-grandfather, Rammohan Datta was a 'managing clerk and associate of an English solicitor'.¹ His grandfather Durgaprasad was 'so skilled in law that his father [Rammohan Datta] made him a partner in his legal profession' (ibid.). Swami Vivekananda's father Vishwanath Datta was an attorney 'in partnership with Ashutosh Dhar, under the firm name of "Dhar and Datta". After some time he settled in the legal profession independently and was enrolled as an attorney-at-law in the High Court of Calcutta' (1.5). Swami Vivekananda, as Narendranath, 'entered the firm of Nimai-chandra Basu, attorney-at-law, as an articled-clerk, in order to qualify himself as an attorney. ... He had gained admission to the three-year Law course in the Metropolitan Institution (now Vidyasagar College)' (1.117).

This influence of law on Swamiji, apart from him using it at times during his talks and lectures, has amazingly influenced the judiciary as well. He is quoted profusely in the judgements of many Indian courts, notably the Supreme Court of India. An attempt is made here to trace some of the judgements of the Supreme Court in which he is quoted within relevant contexts.

On Education and Enlightened Citizenship

There was a case in which the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE),

published by the National Council for Educational Research and Training, was contended to be illegal by the petitioners since it was created without consulting the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE). In the judgement holding the NCFSE to be legal in spite of being created without consultation with CABE, the Supreme Court lauded the ancient *gurukula* system of education. The court said:

Our educational system aims at only information-based knowledge and the holistic views turning the student into a perfect human being and a useful member of society has been completely set aside. Swami Vivekananda aptly said: 'Education is not the amount of information that is put in your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, Man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas. If education is identical with information, libraries are the greatest sages of the world and encyclopaedias are rishis.'²

In another case the apex court held that the state cannot impose its policies on reservation, fees, and other regulations on non-aided minority and non-minority private colleges, including professional colleges. Stressing the quality of education needed the court quoted Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ranganathananda, the thirteenth president of the Ramakrishna Order:

Education is 'continual growth of personality, steady development of character, and the qualitative improvement of life. A trained mind has

the capacity to draw spiritual nourishment from every experience, be it defeat or victory, sorrow or joy. Education is *training the mind* and not *stuffing the brain*.'

'We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.' 'The end of all education, all training, should be man-making. The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow. The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education.'³

A teacher whose services were terminated due to misconduct towards his student had challenged the termination. Delineating the characteristics of an ideal teacher and stressing the importance of the impeccable character a teacher must have, the court quoted Swami Vivekananda: 'Swami Vivekananda has stated that "the student should live from his very boyhood with one whose character is [like] a blazing fire and should have before him a living example of the highest teaching. In our country, the imparting of knowledge has always been through men of renunciation. The charge of imparting knowledge should again fall upon the shoulders of Tyagis."⁴

There was a case in which the petitioners contended that promotions to some employees of the department of health of the government of Uttar Pradesh were withheld and arbitrary appointments and promotions made instead. Talking about enlightened citizenship in the course of judgement the court said:

Swami Vivekananda [*sic*] in his lecture entitled 'The Work Before Us' (1897) published in 'The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda' [Vol.3, p. 269 (1979 edn.)) has stated the scope of enlightened citizenship thus: 'The problem of life is becoming deeper and broader every day as the world moves on. The watchword and the essence have been preached in the days of yore when the

Vedantic truth was first discovered, the solidarity of all life. One atom in the universe cannot move without dragging the whole world along with it. There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake, and it is becoming every day clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial, or national, or narrow grounds. Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole of this world, every aspiration must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity, nay the whole of life, within its scope. This will explain why our country for the last two [*sic*] centuries has not been what she was in the past. We find that one of the causes which led to this degeneration was the narrowing of our view, narrowing the scope of our actions.'⁵

It is worth noting that this judgement profusely quoted the writings of Swami Ranganathananda as well.

On Religion

In the infamous case regarding the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya the court relied on Swami Vivekananda's definition of religion: 'Swami Vivekananda said: "Religion is not in doctrines, in dogmas, nor in intellectual argumentation; it is being and becoming, it is realisation." This thought comes to mind as we contemplate the roots of this controversy. Genesis of this dispute is traceable to erosion of some fundamental values of the plural commitments of our polity.'⁶

While explaining Hindu faith and practice in a case against the state of Andhra Pradesh the court said:

The concept of Hindu religious faith and practice referred to in the judgements in the narration of the facts needs preface with inner depth of religion as revealed by (1) Swami Vivekananda's scholastic concepts in his *The Complete Works*, Vol I, at p. 124; and (2) broad spectrum

of self-realisation by Shri Aurobindo. Swami Vivekananda had stated that: 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.' Religion ... is based upon faith and belief, and, in most cases, consists only of different sets of theories, and that is the reason why there is difference in form.

Thereafter, at p. 341 he had stated that: 'Get rid, in the first place, of all these limited ideas of God and see him in every person—working through all hands, walking through all feet, and eating through every mouth. In every being He lives, through all minds He thinks. He is self-evident, nearer unto us than ourselves. To know this is religion, is faith, and may it please the Lord to give us this faith.' ...

Swami Vivekananda in his lecture on *Religion and Science* incorporated in *The Complete Works* [Vol.VI, 6th Edn.] had stated at p. 81 thus: 'Experience is the only source of knowledge. In the world, religion is the only science where there is no surety, because it is not taught as a science of experience. This should not be. There is always, however, a small group of men who teach religion from experience. They are called mystics, and these mystics in every religion speak the same tongue and teach the

same truth. This is the real science of religion. As mathematics in every part of the world does not differ, so the mystics do not differ. They are all similarly constituted and similarly situated. Their experience is the same; and this becomes law.'

In Vol. II, 9th Edn. at p. 432, Swamiji said that: 'There are two worlds: the microcosm and the macrocosm, the internal and the external. We get truth from both [of] these by means of experience. The truth gathered from internal experience is psychology, metaphysics, and religion; from external experience, the physical sciences. Now a perfect truth should be in harmony with experience[s] in both these worlds. The microcosm must bear testimony to the macrocosm and the macrocosm to the microcosm; physical truth must have its counterpart in the internal world, and internal world must have its verification outside.'

Swami Vivekananda in his *The Complete Works*, Vol. I, 11th Edn. at p. 366 said that: 'The foundations have all been undermined; and the modern man, whatever he may say in public, knows in the privacy of his heart that he can no more "believe", ... believing because it is written in certain books, believing because [his] people like him to believe, the modern man knows it to be impossible for him. There are, of course, a number of people who seem to acquiesce in the so-called popular faith but we also know for certain that they do not think. Their idea of belief may be better translated as "non-thinking



Emblem of the Supreme Court of India

carelessness". This fight cannot last much longer without breaking to pieces all the buildings of religion. ...

'Is religion to justify itself by the discoveries of reason, through which every other science justifies itself? Are the same methods of investigation, which we apply to sciences and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of religion? In my opinion this must be so, and I am also of opinion that the sooner it is done the better. If a religion is destroyed by such investigation, it was then all the time useless, unworthy superstition; and the sooner it goes the better. I am thoroughly convinced that its destruction would be the best thing that could happen. All that is dross will be taken off, no doubt, but the essential parts of religion will emerge triumphant out of this investigation. Not only will it be made scientific—as scientific, at least, as any of the conclusions of physics or chemistry—but will have greater strength, because physics or chemistry has no internal mandate to vouch for its truth, which religion has.'

Swami Vivekananda in his *The Complete Works*, Vol. VI, 6th Edn. at p. 81 said that: 'Religion deals with the truths of the metaphysical world just as chemistry and the other natural sciences deal with the truth[s] of the physical world. The book one must read to learn chemistry is the book of nature. The book from which to learn religion is your own mind and heart. The sage is often ignorant of physical science because he reads the wrong book—the book within; and the scientist is too often ignorant of religion because he, too, reads the wrong book—the book without.'

Again in his *The Complete Works*, (Vol.V, 8th Edn.), pp. 192–93, he says that: 'The basis of all systems, social or political, ... rests upon the goodness of men. No nation is great or good because Parliament enacts this or that, but because its men are great and good. ... Religion goes to the root of the matter. If it is right, all is right ... One must admit that law, government, politics are phases not final in any way. There is

a goal beyond them where law is not needed. ... All great Masters teach the same thing. Christ saw that the basis is not law, that morality and purity are the only strength.' ...

In '*Dharma—a Legal Discipline*'—*Select Speeches and Writings* of Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma, the present President of India [Indian Bar Review, Vol. XX (3 & 4) 1993 Special Issue] in his Centenary Speech of Swami Vivekananda in the Parliament of Religions, he emphasised 'time-honoured philosophy of oneness and harmony within pluralism, the recognition of, respect for, and acceptance of different paths of logical and intuitive access to Absolute Truth.' He reiterated what Swami Vivekananda had said one century ago at Chicago: 'We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true' and concluded that 'if India is to grow to her full potential as a strong, united, prosperous nation, a nation attuned to the highest moral and ethical values, true to the genius of her cultural and spiritual heritage, we shall all have to strive each day to build harmony, justice and creative endeavour. Indeed, in a very real way, it is our duty so to strive.' He exhorted the youth of the country to be the vanguard of that mission.⁷

In a case relating to the petition of forfeiture of a book on the grounds that it may hurt the feelings of Hindus, the court opined:

We clarify that we express no view on the merits of the book or its provocative vitriol. It depends on a complex of factors. What offends a primitive people may be laughable for progressive communities. What is outrageous heresy for one religion or sect or country or time may be untouchably holy for another. Some primitive people may still be outraged by the admonition of Swami Vivekananda: 'Our religion is in the kitchen, our God is the cooking pot, and our religion is don't touch me, I am holy' (quoted at p. 339 by Jawaharlal Nehru in *Discovery of India*).⁸

On Social Discrimination

In an interesting case regarding discrimination on the basis of caste, the apex court condemned untouchability: 'Swami Vivekanand [*sic*] had stated in his complete works that "we refuse entirely to identify ourselves with 'do not touch me' [Don't-touchism]. That is not Hinduism. It is in none of our books. It is an [un]orthodox superstition which has interfered with national life [*sic*] all along the line.'"'

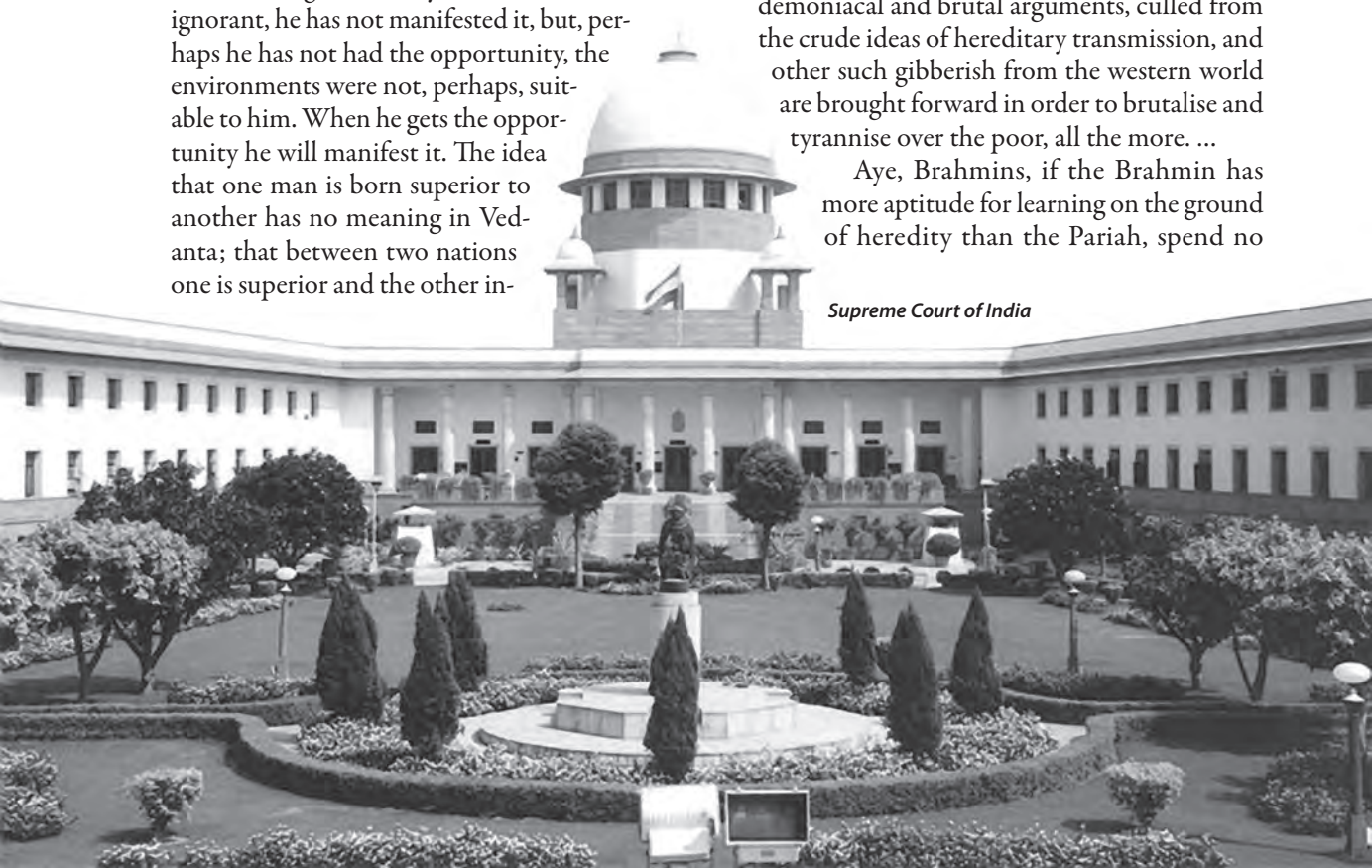
Concerning the reservation of government posts for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the court denounced untouchability in a similar case:

We cannot blink at the agony of the depressed classes over the centuries condemned by all social reformers as rank irreligion and social injustice. Swami Vivekananda, for instance, stung by glaring social injustice, argued: 'The same power is in every man, the one manifesting more, the other less. ... Where is the claim to privilege? All knowledge is in every soul, even in the most ignorant, he has not manifested it, but, perhaps he has not had the opportunity, the environments were not, perhaps, suitable to him. When he gets the opportunity he will manifest it. The idea that one man is born superior to another has no meaning in Ved-anta; that between two nations one is superior and the other in-

ferior has no meaning whatsoever. ... Men will be born differentiated; some will have more power than others. We cannot stop that but that on account of this power to acquire wealth they should tyrannise and ride roughshod over those, who cannot acquire so much wealth, is not a part of the law, and the fight has been against that. The enjoyment of advantage over another is privilege, and throughout ages the aim of morality has been its destruction. ... Our aristocratic ancestors went on treading the common masses of our country underfoot till they became helpless, till under this torment the poor, poor people nearly forgot that they were human beings. They have been compelled to be merely hewers of wood and drawers of water for centuries, so much so, that they are made to believe that they are born as slaves, born as hewers of wood and drawers of water. With all our boasted education of modern times, if anybody says a kind word for them, I often find our men shrink at once from the duty of lifting them up, these poor downtrodden people. Not only so, but I also find that all sorts of most demoniacal and brutal arguments, culled from the crude ideas of hereditary transmission, and other such gibberish from the western world are brought forward in order to brutalise and tyrannise over the poor, all the more. ...

Aye, Brahmins, if the Brahmin has more aptitude for learning on the ground of heredity than the Pariah, spend no

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more money on the Brahmin's education, but spend all on the Pariah. Give to the weak, for there all the gift is needed. ... Our poor people, these downtrodden masses of India, therefore, require to hear and to know what they really are. Aye, let every man and woman and child, without respect of caste or birth, weakness and strength, hear and learn that behind the strong and the weak, behind the high and the low, behind everyone, there is that Infinite Soul, assuring that infinite possibility and the infinite capacity of all to become great and good. Let us proclaim to every soul—'Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached.' Arise, awake! Awake from the hypnotism of weakness. None is really weak; the soul is infinite, omnipotent and omniscient. Stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God within you, do not deny Him! Too much of inactivity, too much of weakness, too much of hypnotism has been and is upon our race. ... Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come, when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity. ...

Our proletariat are doing their duty ... is there no heroism in it? Many turn out to be heroes, when they have some great task to perform. Even a coward easily gives up his life, and the most selfish man behaves disinterestedly when there is a multitude to cheer them on; but blessed indeed is he who manifests the same unselfishness and devotion to duty in the smallest of acts, unnoticed by all—and it is you who are actually doing this, ye ever-trampled labouring classes of India! I bow to you.¹⁰

Regarding the prohibition of the government on a person's going abroad the court discussed the importance of travel across the world:

Swami Vivekananda, that saintly revolutionary who spanned East and West, exhorted, dwelling on the nation's fall of the last century: 'My idea as to the keynote of our national downfall is that we do not mix with other nations—that

is the one and sole cause. We never had the opportunity to compare, notes. We were *Kupa-Mandukas* (frogs in a well).' ...

'One of the great causes of India's misery and downfall has been that she narrowed herself, went into her shell, as the oyster does, and refused to give her jewels and her treasures to the other races of mankind, refused to give the life-giving truths to thirsting nations outside the Aryan fold. That has been the one great cause; that we did not go out, that we did not compare notes with other nations—that has been the one great cause of our downfall, and everyone of you knows that that little stir, the little life you see in India, begins from the day when Raja Rammohan Roy broke through the walls of this exclusiveness. Since that day, history in India has taken another turn and now it is growing with accelerated motion. If we have had little rivulets in the past, deluges are coming, and none can resist them. Therefore, we must go out, and the secret of life is to give and take. Are we to take always, to sit at the feet of the Westerners to learn everything, even religion? We can learn mechanism from them. We can learn many other things. But we have to teach them something. ... Therefore we must go out, exchange our spirituality for anything they have to give us; for the marvels of the region of spirit we will exchange the marvels of the region of matter. ... There cannot be friendship without equality, and there cannot be equality when one party is always the teacher and the other party sits always at his feet. If you want to become equal with the Englishman or the American, you will have to teach as well as to learn, and you have plenty yet to teach to the world for centuries to come.'¹¹

With regard to the rights to sell property by a tribal, the court stressed the need for empathy towards the downtrodden:

As quoted by B K Roy in his *Socio-Political Views of Vivekananda*, at p. 52, Swami Vivekananda,

speaking on social and spiritual justice, has said: 'I do not believe in a God who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven. Pooh! India is to be raised, the poor are to be fed, education is to be spread, and the evil of priestcraft is to be removed ... more bread, more opportunity for everybody.' ...

It is well to remember what Vivekananda said about poor: 'Feel, my children, feel, feel for the poor, the ignorant, the downtrodden, feel till the heart stops, the brain reels and you think you will go mad.'¹²

The court has quoted Swami Vivekananda while discussing economic justice:

What Swami Vivekananda wrote in a different context may perhaps help a quicker implementation of the goal to bring about the overdue changes for transforming India in a positive way and in fulfilling the dreams of the Constitution fathers. These were the words of the Swami: 'It is imperative that all these various Yogas should be carried out in practice. Mere theories about them will not do any good. First we have to hear about them, then we have to think about them. We have to reason the thoughts out, impress them on our minds, and [we have to] meditate on them, realise them, until at last they become our whole life. No longer will religion remain a bundle of ideas or theories [n]or an intellectual assent; it will enter into our very self. By means of an intellectual assent, we may today subscribe to many foolish things, and change our minds altogether tomorrow. But true religion never changes. Religion is realisation; not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes. That is religion.'¹³

Ideas of Swami Vivekananda

In some judgements, though the Supreme Court has not directly quoted Swami Vivekananda, it

has referred to his ideas. In *S R Bommai v. Union of India*, the court noted:

Swami Vivekanand [*sic*] explaining the Vedantic ideas of God and religion in comparison with western thoughts stated that the religious attitude is always to seek the dignity inside of his own self as a natural characteristic of Hindu religion and religious attitude is always presented by making the subject close his eyes looking inward. ... Swami Vivekanand [*sic*] stated that right of religious ideals is the same morality; one thing is only preached: Myself say 'Om'; others [*sic*] says 'Johova', [*sic*] another 'Allaha ho Mohammad', another cries 'Jesus'. ... Swami Vivekanand, [*sic*] and Mahatma Gandhi, though greatest Hinduist, [*sic*] their teachings and examples of lives give us the message of the blend of religion and the secularism for the good of all the men.¹⁴

In a certain case the court described the influence of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda:

The development of Hindu religion and philosophy shows that from time to time saints and religious reformers attempted to remove from the Hindu thought and practices elements of corruption and superstition and that led to the formation of different sects. Buddha started Buddhism; Mahavir founded Jainism; Basava became the founder of Lingayat religion, Dnyaneshwar [*sic*] and Tukaram initiated the Varakari Cult; Guru Nank [*sic*] inspired Sikhism; Dayananda founded Arya Samaj, and Chaitanya began Bhakti cult; and as a result of the teachings of Ramkrishna [*sic*] and Vivekananda, Hindu religion flowered into its most attractive, progressive and dynamic form. If we study the teachings of these saints and religious reformers, we would notice an amount of divergence in their respective views; but underneath that divergence, there is a kind of subtle indescribable unity which

keeps them within the sweep of the broad and progressive Hindu religion.¹⁵

Swami Vivekananda was interested not only in religion but in everything that concerned man—science, art, literature, history, politics. He gave much thought to alleviating India's problems such as poverty, illiteracy, casteism, exploitation, and so on. His luminous mind found solutions that are as valid today as they were more than a century ago.

On 14 February 1897 Swamiji exhorted Indians: 'For the next fifty years this alone shall be our keynote—this, our great Mother India.'¹⁶ His utterance proved to be prophetic: fifty years later, India became free. Today he is guiding us as 'a voice without a form'.

For the nation to prosper, the executive, parliament, and judiciary should function smoothly. The judiciary, however, has the added responsibility to protect the constitution so that democracy can function and flourish. The judiciary in using Swami Vivekananda's wisdom and insight is bringing to fruition his vision of an enlightened India.



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12. *Murlidhar Dayandeo Kesekar v. Vishwanath Pandu Barde and Another* (1995) 2 SCC Suppl. 549 at 552.
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Court Room in the Supreme Court of India



Sri Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age – III

Swami Bhajanananda

AMONG THE FUNCTIONS of an avatara or prophet, the most widely recognized is his function as world teacher. From time immemorial the guru-disciple relationship has been regarded in India as the closest, highest, and most sacred of human relationships. Nowhere else in the world is the institution of the guru given so much importance and has been so much glorified as it is in India. In modern times this relationship found its most striking and convincing expression in the relationship between Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples. Their relationship was so deep, strong, supramundane, and divine that ordinary people cannot have a proper understanding of it.

A true guru helps the disciple in several ways. He gives true knowledge, instructs the disciple about the path he has to follow, corrects him when he goes wrong, guides him as he advances on the spiritual path, and lastly awakens the spiritual consciousness of his disciple. Unlike secular knowledge, which can be received by the ordinary mind and can be gained from books, spiritual knowledge can be received only by the higher *buddhi*, intuitive faculty, that lies dormant in ordinary people and has to be awakened by the guru. Regarding this role of the guru, Swami Vivekananda says in his *Bhakti Yoga*:

In the vast majority of cases such help [from the guru] is absolutely necessary. When it comes, the higher powers and possibilities of the soul

are quickened, spiritual life is awakened, growth is animated, and man becomes holy and perfect in the end.

This quickening impulse cannot be derived from books. The soul can only receive impulses from another soul, and from nothing else.¹

Sri Ramakrishna performed all the above-mentioned functions of a guru to such an extent of thoroughness that it has become a shining example of the important role that the guru plays in spiritual life. Through his example he has re-instated the guru tradition.

The spiritual impulse imparted by a human guru can influence only a small number of spiritual seekers. The spiritual impulse generated by the avatara sets in motion a mighty spiritual current that transforms the lives of thousands of people for centuries. The power of this spiritual current is sustained by a succession of gurus, *guru-parampara*. It is this unbroken line of guru power that forms the spiritual base of the Ramakrishna movement.

The avatara not only awakens the souls of those who surrender themselves to him, but also guides them through the turmoil and uncertainty of life. He becomes the spiritual seeker's eternal companion. In a hymn to Sri Ramakrishna as guru Swami Abhedananda writes: '*Samśārārṇava-ghore yaḥ karnādhāra-svarūpakāḥ, namo'stu rāmakṛṣṇāya tasmai śrīgurave namaḥ*'; salutations to Sri Ramakrishna, the guru, who serves as the helmsman of my life's

boat, steering it across the turbulent ocean of transmigratory existence.²

The avatara as world teacher comes with a new message for the whole humanity and for a whole age. The message of Sri Ramakrishna is particularly suited to the present age because it is in tune with the zeitgeist, the spirit of the age, which is characterized by modernity, universality, and positive outlook. The message of Sri Ramakrishna is *modern* in its expression and relevant to the present-day social situation; it is *universal* in its scope as it is meant for all people; it is *positive* in its approach to the problems of today's world. Considering the importance of this message, it is being treated separately in the next section.

Message of Sri Ramakrishna as World Teacher

What is the basic message of Sri Ramakrishna? What is its meaning for the modern man? What are its promises? Sri Ramakrishna's message is a message of faith and hope, purity and strength, love and service, harmony and peace.

Message of Faith and Hope • 'God realization is the real purpose of human life.' This is the quintessential teaching of Sri Ramakrishna. This of course is not a new idea; it has been with Indian culture from time immemorial. What is new in Sri Ramakrishna's message is that it induces the faith that God exists; that God realization is possible for all people irrespective of their caste, religion, race, or gender; and that God realization is possible in all places and in all the situations of life, even in the midst of household duties.

Furthermore, Sri Ramakrishna's message infuses the hope that even bohemians, drunkards, and the worst sinners can realize God. After Sri Krishna in the Bhagavadgita, this may be the first time that an avatara has given such a divine assurance of redemption in India—the practical implications of Sri Ramakrishna's concept

of God realization will be discussed further in a later part of this article.

Message of Purity and Strength • Morality forms the foundation of every religion, and all incarnations and prophets have given primary importance to it. Although there is much common ground among religions with regard to morality, there are also several differences. Some of these differences are caused by doctrinal differences, whereas the others are caused by differences in social conventions and external observances. These differences in moral codes and conduct have created several areas of conflict among religions.

Sri Ramakrishna went beyond conventional morality and stressed purity, which is the real basis and aim of all moral codes and conduct. The difference between conventional morality

Chair, made of wood and cane, in which Sri Ramakrishna sat





Silver spoon used by Sri Ramakrishna

degree of restraint imposed by religion, higher values, and strong family bond. But these restraints are being removed owing to the erosion of faith in traditional religions and the spread of materialistic ideas.

and purity is to be noted in this: that morality is the basis of religion, whereas purity is the basis of spirituality. Morality is how we appear to other people; purity is how we appear to God. Morality is conformity to codes and conduct of behaviour, whereas purity is freedom from the hold of past *samskaras* of desires and instinctual drives.

Among these drives and desires, the sex drive, *kāma*, and the drive to acquire wealth, *artha* or *kāñcana*, are the more powerful ones. These drives drain away a major part of a person's psychic energy and are the main cause of bondage. Therefore, as long as they remain strong it is not possible for a spiritual seeker to transcend his sense-bound life and experience higher freedom, joy, and peace. Even to attain and retain success in worldly pursuits it is necessary that one should keep these powerful drives under control and not be a slave to them.

The meaning and implications of Sri Ramakrishna's advocacy of renunciation of *kāma* and *kāñcana*, lust and lucre, are to be understood in a larger context. For Sri Ramakrishna purity meant freedom from the hold of *kāma-kāñcana*. This is an ever-recurring theme in his teachings. The great relevance of this teaching in the present-day society all over the world can hardly be exaggerated. Almost all the evils of society have their root-cause in the two drives for sex and wealth. Until modern times they had been kept under some

It is obvious that if the human race is to survive for a very long period of time, it will have to learn to control its instinctive drives. Several historians and sociologists have pointed out that unrestrained indulgence in sensual pleasures and luxury reduces the physical and moral energy and power of endurance of people, and this was one of the factors that caused the decline and death of some civilizations of the past. At the individual level millions of people have brought ruin upon their families by their uncontrolled pursuit of sex and money. At the social level the alarming increase in crime, violence, immorality, drug abuse, and so forth in recent years are the direct or indirect results of the promotion of sensuality and competition in the present-day world. The socio-economic revolutions that took place in Russia and China, inspired by Marxist ideology, and the socio-religious revolutions that took place in Iran and Afghanistan, inspired by Islamic ideology, are collective reactions to free indulgence in wealth and sensual enjoyment by a small group of privileged people.

The important point to note here is that Sri Ramakrishna's advocacy of purity of mind was not based on negative considerations; it was wholly positive. Sri Ramakrishna taught two positive approaches to purity. In the first place purity is not something to be acquired from outside. It is our true inherent nature. One difficulty about strict observance of purity in life is the popular belief

that to yield to one's instincts and impulses is a natural way of life, whereas to be pure and holy is something artificial and unnatural. The truth is, according to Vedanta, that our true nature is the Atman, which is pure self-luminous consciousness. Impurities and sinful tendencies belong to the mind; the Atman is untouched by them. To lead a pure life a person has only to identify himself with his Atman and detach himself from the impurities of the mind. Thus, leading a pure life is the most natural way of life, whereas an impure life is a fall from the natural way. Women being embodiments of divine motherhood, should always be treated with respect.

The second positive approach to purity that Sri Ramakrishna taught is to have faith in the sanctifying and saving power of divine grace as well as in the power of the divine name. He never liked the self-demeaning, self-deprecating attitude of a sinner, to look upon oneself as a worthless sinner. He pointed out that by constantly dwelling upon the negative side of one's personality and by constantly talking about and brooding over the mistakes one had committed in the past, the evil tendencies in the mind become all the more strengthened and deep-rooted. By filling the mind with positive, purifying ideas, by regarding oneself as pure and free, the nobler tendencies in the mind are strengthened and these will keep the lower tendencies under check. But in order to maintain such a positive attitude one needs to have strength and courage, which comes by having faith in divine grace, in the saving power of God. Statements such as the following are quite common in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*:

The wretch who constantly says 'I am bound, I am bound' only succeeds in being bound. He who says day and night, 'I am a sinner, I am a sinner' verily becomes a sinner.

One should have such burning faith in God that one can say: 'What? I have repeated the

name of God, and can sin still cling to me? How can I be a sinner anymore? How can I be in bondage anymore?'

If a man repeats the name of God, his body, mind, and everything becomes pure. Why should one talk only about sin and hell, and such things? Say but once, 'O Lord, I have undoubtedly done wicked things, but I won't repeat them.' And have faith in His name.³

We have seen that Sri Ramakrishna taught two positive approaches to purity of mind. The first one, based on Self-knowledge, belongs to the path of knowledge, and the second one, based on divine grace, belongs to the path of devotion. These approaches support each other, and so one may follow both of them. Both the approaches generate strength and courage in the mind, or rather, they rouse the power and strength already inherent in the mind. Purity and strength thus constitute an important aspect of Sri Ramakrishna's message.

Message of Love and Service • In the previous instalment of this series—under the subtitle *Premārpaṇa* and *Prāṇārpaṇa*⁴—we discussed Sri Ramakrishna's life as the embodiment of divine love and the spirit of service. Love and service too form an essential aspect of his message. Some salient points of his message of love are briefly stated below.

(i) Sri Ramakrishna removed the barrier between love for human beings and love for God. For him the former is an expression of the latter. It is the unity of all selves with the supreme Self, Paramatman, that is the true basis of human love. We should love people not for the sake of their bodies and minds but for the sake of the supreme Spirit that dwells in them. When love is spiritualized or divinized in this way, it does not cause bondage.

This spiritual love is universal. It is not confined to the members of one's family but extends

to all people without any distinctions of caste, religion, or race.

However, although the same God dwells in all people, the manifestation of divine power varies from person to person. If a person is endowed with extraordinary unselfishness, deep knowledge, and other talents it is an indication that there is a greater manifestation of the Divine in that person, and as a consequence he or she is generally treated with greater regard.

(ii) Sri Ramakrishna removed the barrier between service to God and service to man. Since God dwells in all people, service to man should be regarded as service to God—*śiva-jñāne jīva seva*. Service is usually done either out of a sense of duty or out of pity or compassion. Duty implies obligation and compulsion, and so service done as duty is not voluntary service. When service is done out of pity or compassion, it lowers the position of the beneficiary, the person who is served. But when service is rendered as worship, it elevates both the server and the person who is served. Rendering service then becomes a privilege.

Other benefits this doctrine confers are: (a) it frees a person from egoism; (b) it makes social service a spiritual discipline; and (c) it makes moral life natural and spontaneous.

Morality is usually forced upon people either by the power of secular laws or by religious sermonizing. But when work is done as worship, all the virtues such as truthfulness, non-violence, chastity, non-exploitation, and the like come to be spontaneously fulfilled in a person's life.

Sri Ramakrishna's doctrine of service as worship forms the basis of Swami Vivekananda's gospel of social service. Swamiji's contribution to the doctrine lies in extending its application to the field of service to the poor, the downtrodden, and the sick.

(iii) In the field of love for God, known as bhakti, Sri Ramakrishna has provided several original insights as well.

He taught that in the present age, known as Kali Yuga, bhakti yoga is the best spiritual path for the majority of people.⁵ It is generally believed that full knowledge of Brahman can be attained only by following the path of jnana. But Sri Ramakrishna held that full knowledge of Brahman can be attained through the path of bhakti as well. By the grace of God it is possible even to attain the non-dual state of oneness with Brahman, but devotees of God do not generally like to have it. 'They want to taste sugar, not to become sugar.' That is, they want to enjoy the bliss of Brahman by retaining their individuality, not to become one with the bliss of Brahman (171–2, 637).

However, it is not ordinary bhakti, which Sri Ramakrishna called 'unripe' bhakti, that leads to the highest knowledge. To attain the highest knowledge it is necessary to have what Sri Ramakrishna called 'ripe' bhakti, which is of the nature of pure *ekāṅgi*, one-pointed, intense devotion known as *prema-bhakti* or *rāga-bhakti* (172–3).

Sri Ramakrishna also taught that jnana and bhakti are not contradictory to each other but support each other. In fact, he held that jnana is a great help in attaining higher bhakti. In this syncretic path of jnana-bhakti the spiritual seeker looks upon himself as the Atman and God as the Paramatman, and regards bhakti as the 'eternal relation between the eternal soul and eternal God'. Depending upon the degree of realization attained by seekers, they may be said to belong to three groups, as Sri Ramakrishna pointed out: 'There are three classes of devotees. The lowest one says, "God is up there." That is, he points to heaven. The mediocre devotee says that God dwells in the heart as the "Inner Controller". But the highest devotee says: "God alone has

become everything. All that we perceive is so many forms of God” (396).

By jnana Sri Ramakrishna meant not mere book knowledge but true insight or understanding, which is the result of an inner awakening or realization. At the highest level of realization jnana and bhakti become one. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: ‘Perfect jnana and perfect devotion are one and the same thing’ (811).

In this context another teaching of Sri Ramakrishna deserves special mention here: ‘Bhakti may be likened to a woman who has access to the inner court of a house. Jnana can go only as far as the outer rooms’ (858; see also 610, 719). In the path of jnana followed by Advaita Vedanta the seeker negates the world as maya by the method of *neti, neti*—not this, not this—before realizing Brahman. By contrast, in the path of bhakti the seeker accepts the reality of the world and sees that it is pervaded by Brahman. Hence the bhakta’s view is more inclusive; it speaks more about the glory of Brahman. The importance of this teaching lies in the fact that it is strikingly similar to the teaching of the Gita. In the eleventh chapter of the Gita Sri Krishna says: ‘Only through one-pointed bhakti can my true nature be known, seen, and entered into.’⁶ Again, in the last chapter (18.55), a similar idea is reiterated. The acharyas have explained these two verses to suit their own schools of thought. The words *praveṣṭum* and *viśate* in these two verses represent a more advanced stage of experience than mere ‘seeing’. They can be understood in a better way in the light of Sri Ramakrishna’s doctrine that bhakti leads to the ‘inner court’.

Message of Acceptance and Harmony • Sri Ramakrishna is known all over the world as the prophet of har-

mony of religions. He was actually the prophet of several other types of harmony as well. He said: ‘He is indeed a real man who has harmonized everything.’⁷ Harmony therefore forms an important aspect of Sri Ramakrishna’s message. Before discussing this we have to take note of three important points on which Sri Ramakrishna’s message of harmony is based.

Firstly, Sri Ramakrishna’s whole outlook on life was characterized by an all-embracing vision of harmony. This vision of harmony found expression in his own life. His whole life was a symphony of diverse patterns of thinking, feeling, *bhavās*—spiritual moods—attitudes, interests, capacities, and so forth. He was by nature very gentle, kind, sweet, and affectionate and could establish friendly relationships with people belonging to different walks of life, different religions and sects. Hindus, Brahmos, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs—all were happy in his company. However, he himself stood far above all sects and groups. Regarding this Swami Abhedananda wrote

China clay cup used by Sri Ramakrishna



about Sri Ramakrishna in a hymn: '*Pūjitā yena vai śaśvat sarve'api sāmpradāyikāḥ, sampradāyavibhīno yaḥ sampradāyaṁ na nindati*'; he showed respect to all traditions and sects, he never criticized any sect, but he himself remained free of all sectarian affiliations.'⁸

Secondly, the outlook of harmony that characterized Sri Ramakrishna's life was not a mere 'outlook' or attitude, it was deeply rooted in the realization that behind all the diversities of life there is a basic unity of consciousness, which is unchanging and eternal. It is the realization of the principle of 'unity in diversity' that forms the basis of Sri Ramakrishna's doctrine of harmony.

The third characteristic of Sri Ramakrishna's outlook on life is the principle of acceptance. He accepted diversity as a natural phenomenon. Diversity does not necessarily mean conflict or contradiction. Diversity can also mean harmony. Conflict comes only when people refuse to ac-

cept diversity as the natural state and try to put everyone into a Procrustean bed.

Sri Ramakrishna's Types of Harmony

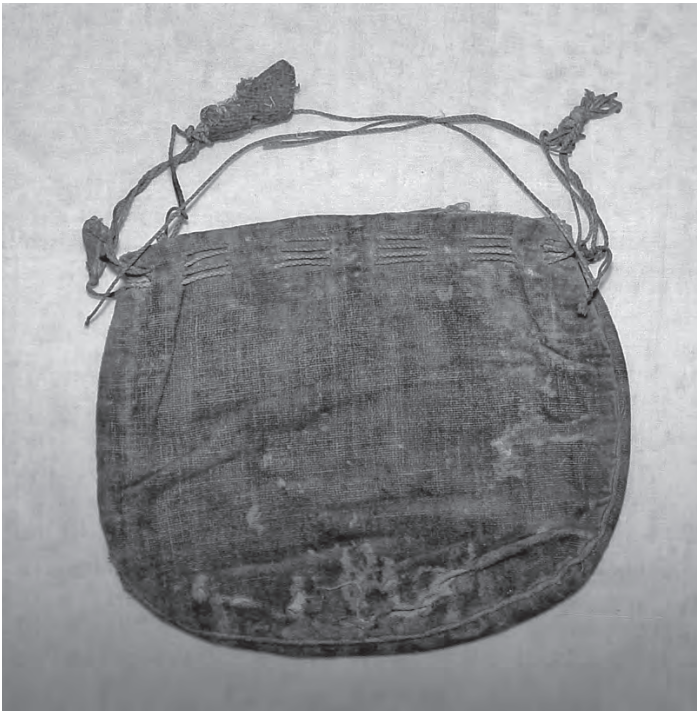
Swami Ghanananda, in his book *Sri Ramakrishna and His Unique Message*, discusses in detail seven types of harmony that Sri Ramakrishna has brought about through his life and teachings.⁹ Here we wish to discuss briefly five types of harmony. These are: harmony of religions, harmony of sects within Hinduism, harmony of spiritual paths, harmony of the ancient and the modern—or harmony of the East and West—and harmony of spiritual life and social life.

Harmony of Religions • Every religion has three main levels or dimensions: social, doctrinal, and spiritual. The phrase 'harmony of religions' covers harmony at all these three levels.

The social dimension of religion consists of customs, festivals, and social institutions such as church, mosque, temple, community, caste, and the like. It is at this level that religions show maximum diversity. It is also about this dimension of religion that most of the quarrels among the followers of different religions take place. 'Harmony of religions' at this level means the living together of people belonging to different religions in a spirit of tolerance and amity. This tolerance and social amity is usually ensured by the laws of the country, and have often to be enforced by the police.

It is at this level that Sri Ramakrishna's life assumes significance. He had a wonderful capacity to identify himself with each and every religion. For instance, when he followed Islamic sadhana, he dressed and lived like a Muslim and used to go to a nearby mosque to offer namaz there. However,

Batua, small cotton bag, used by Sri Ramakrishna to carry spices



this does not mean we should imitate Sri Ramakrishna in this regard. What Sri Ramakrishna's life teaches us is that we should not judge other religions by our narrow views and prejudices, but should see each religion through the eyes of its followers, and we should respect the right of everyone to follow his own religious customs and institutions.

Sri Ramakrishna taught that it is not enough to somehow 'tolerate' other religions, but we should recognize the good and positive aspects of other religions and maintain a brotherly or friendly relationship with their followers. His advice on this matter given to Vijay Goswami, one of the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal, deserves to be written in letters of gold in the heart of everyone. He said:

When you mix with people outside your Samaj, love them all. When in their company be one of them. Don't harbour malice towards them. Don't turn up your nose in hatred and say: 'Oh! This man believes in God with form and not in the formless God. That man believes in the formless God and not in God with form. This man is a Christian. This man is a Hindu. This man is a Mussalman.' It is God alone who makes people see things in different ways. Know that people have different natures. Realize this and mix with them as much as you can. And love all. But enter your own inner chamber to enjoy peace and bliss. ...

The cowherds take the cows to graze in the pasture. There the cattle mix. They all form one herd. But on returning to their sheds in the evening they are separated. Then each stays by itself in its own stall.¹⁰

After the completion of his sadhanas, Sri Ramakrishna began to preach openly his doctrine of *dharma-samanvaya*, harmony of religions. Attracted by his spiritual aura, love, and wide sympathy people belonging to various re-

ligions and denominations began to visit him, and his life itself became a veritable parliament of religions. Swami Vivekananda, in his reply to the address of welcome given to him in Calcutta in 1897, pointed out that unlike the world parliament of religions held in Chicago in 1893, which was only an outer show, Sri Ramakrishna's life itself at Dakshineswar was a real parliament of religions. To quote Swamiji's words: 'Here, in sight of the city, had been living a man whose whole life was a Parliament of Religions as it should be.'¹¹

The second level or dimension of religion consists of doctrines. This is the plane of ideas, the plane where religious doctrines, ideas, and concepts take shape and influence the minds and actions of people. These doctrines originate in the main revealed scripture of each religion, such as the Vedas, the Bible, the Quran, and others. The original doctrines are explained and developed further by subsequent teachers. In this way creeds, dogmas, moral principles, codes of conduct, philosophical schools come into existence. All these doctrinal formulations together constitute the theoretical or philosophical edifice of each religion.

The followers of each religion confine themselves to the conceptual edifice of their own religions and see the world through its windows. They are either ignorant of or refuse to know about the doctrinal edifices of other religions. Hence, they conclude that their own religion is the only true religion and all other religions are false. Such a narrow attitude is known as exclusivism.

It is at the doctrinal plane that theologians, priests, mullahs, religious teachers, and preachers play a major role. They thrust their narrow, dogmatic views on common people and often create religious controversies and quarrels. Nowadays some of them have come to hold a slightly more

liberal view. They say: 'Yes, our religion alone is true, but other religions are not false, because they are all *included* in our religion. Other religions are only preparations to understand and accept our religion.' According to this view, one's own religion is like a big mansion and other religions are like unimportant rooms in it. This view is known as inclusivism.

In this global situation Sri Ramakrishna's life and message assume great significance. He had the courage and broadness of mind to *live* for a time in the doctrinal edifices of several religions and establish the truth that they all have the same foundation and they all open to the same ultimate Reality. That is, religions of the world are different pathways to the same ultimate goal and hence they are all true. This view is nowadays known as pluralism.

As an inter-religious attitude pluralism is being held by an increasing number of Christian religious leaders, in spite of the official disapproval of Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Churches. More importantly, it is becoming popular among the younger generation in the West. Through the Internet and other electronic media the youth gain access to the rich treasures of world religions and, since they are free to think independently, naturally adopt the pluralistic attitude. But not many are aware that

it was Sri Ramakrishna who, for the first time in human history, verified the truth of religious pluralism through actual experience and established its authenticity by putting it into practice in his own life.¹²

The main principles of religious pluralism that Sri Ramakrishna taught are briefly stated below.

(i) The ultimate Reality is only one, but is known by different names in different religions. Sri Ramakrishna explains this principle as follows: 'Rama is one, but He has a thousand names. He who is called "God" by the Christians is addressed by the Hindus as Rama, Krishna, Ishvara and by other names. A lake has many ghats. The Hindus drink water at one ghat and call it "jal"; the Christians at another, and call it "water"; the Mussalmans at a third, and call it "pani". Likewise, He who is God to the Christians is Allah to the Mussalmans.'¹³

(ii) The ultimate Reality is beyond the reach of the ordinary mind and words. Hence, the real nature of the ultimate Reality can never be expressed in words. As Sri Ramakrishna has put it, other than Brahman—the ultimate Reality—everything in the world has been made *ucchīṣṭa*, defiled, by uttering it, but nobody has been able to tell what Brahman is. In this connection it should be noted that the transcendent nature of

God is accepted in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions. Buddha's concept of *śūnya*, emptiness, may also indicate the same truth.

The views expressed in different scriptures are only 'opinions'. This is an axiomatic principle in Advaita Vedanta. Even the so-

Sri Ramakrishna's tooth powder in a pot made of brass



called definition of Brahman—such as ‘*Satyam, jñānam, anantam brahma*; Brahman is truth, knowledge, and infinity’—is only a *lakṣaṇam*, a verbal mark or indicator, and does not reveal the true nature of Brahman.

However, the ‘opinions’ expressed in different scriptures are not false, because they reveal some aspect of the ultimate Reality. Nor are the different views found in different scriptures mutually contradictory. Rather, they are mutually complementary, since they together give greater understanding of the ultimate Reality.

(iii) Although the true nature of the ultimate Reality cannot be understood by the ordinary mind, it is possible to transcend the ordinary mind through appropriate spiritual disciplines and divine grace, and thus achieve superconscious realization of the true nature of the ultimate Reality.

This superconscious realization can be attained through several paths. Religions of the world are different pathways to the same ultimate Reality. As Sri Ramakrishna has put it: ‘*Yato mat, tato path*; as many faiths so many paths.’

Realization of the ultimate Reality forms the essential core and goal of every religion. Dogmas, customs, rituals, festivals, and the like are only secondary details.

(iv) Since all world religions lead to the same ultimate goal, they are all to be regarded as true and valid. This does not mean that all the religions are one and the same. Religions are different pathways. Differences among religions can and will remain, and are to be respected.

Knowing that the differences among religions pertain only to the outer shells of religions, we should live in harmony and fellowship with the followers of different religions.

Unity at the transcendent level and harmony at the empirical level—this is in essence Sri Ramakrishna’s message of harmony of religions.

(v) Each person should remain steadfast in one’s own path in a spirit of *iṣṭaniṣṭhā*, steadfastness to one’s ideal, without thinking that one’s path alone is true and perfect. The fact that Sri Ramakrishna followed different religious paths does not mean that everyone is expected to imitate him in this respect. Sri Ramakrishna greatly encouraged everyone to follow one’s own path sincerely with an unswerving faith. He compared trying different paths to the attempt to dig a well in different places without going deeper in any one place.

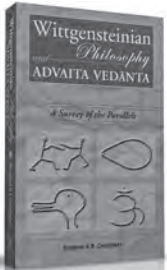
(To be concluded)

References and Notes

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 3.45.
2. *Complete Works of Swami Abhedananda*, 10 vols (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1968), 7.360.
3. M, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 138.
4. See Swami Bhajananda, ‘Sri Ramakrishna: The ‘New Man’ of the Age – II’, *Prabuddha Bharata*, 116/4 (April 2011), 360–2.
5. See *Gospel* 452, 468.
6. *Bhagavadgita*, 11.54.
7. *Gospel*, 490.
8. *Complete Works of Swami Abhedananda*, 7.360.
9. Swami Ghanananda, *Sri Ramakrishna and His Unique Message* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2005), 116–33.
10. *Gospel*, 637.
11. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 3.315. Emphasis added.
12. For a detailed discussion on Sri Ramakrishna’s doctrine of harmony of religions see Swami Bhajananda, *Harmony of Religions from the Standpoint of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda* (Kolkata: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 2008).
13. *Gospel*, 922.

REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



Wittgensteinian Philosophy and Advaita Vedānta:

A Survey of the Parallels

Ravindra K S Choudhary

D K Printworld, 'Sri Kunj', F-52, Bali
Nagar, New Delhi 110 015. Web-
site: www.dkprintworld.com. 2007.
xxii + 262 pp. ₹ 550.

Comparative studies, to find parallels in this case, of Western philosophy and Indic religious systems is a growing field of intensive investigation; it is certainly a commendable attempt and promises a common ground which, alongside religious harmony, may also prove to be a fruitful philosophical exploration. Especially so when the attempt tries to correlate the most elusive as also the exceptionally original philosophy of Wittgenstein and the equally tough Advaita Vedānta—for instance, a pioneering study by Harold Coward of Nagarjuna and Derrida comes to mind.

It is in this hinterland that Professor Choudhary's study finds its moorings. There are precedents for such studies. For instance, Professor R C Pradhan's study of *Tractatus*, though not a full length study in its area, suggests such a possibility: 'The total "reality" which we experience as the World is the Advaitic Brahman. It is the whole reality that cannot be expressed in language but can only be conceived or thought. This is the crux of the vedantic way of thinking which Wittgenstein studied'—R C Pradhan, *The Great Mirror: An Essay on Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (New Delhi: Kalki Prakash, 2007), 370.

It is, of course, debatable whether Wittgenstein thought of religion as a philosophical system to be investigated or merely as the most pervasive 'form of life'. Explaining 'form of life' Norman Malcolm says: 'I think that there was in him [Wittgenstein], in some sense, the possibility of religion. I believe that he looked on religion as "a

form of life" (to use an expression from the *Investigations*) in which he did not participate, but with which he was sympathetic and which greatly interested him'—quoted in S Stephen Hilmy, *The Later Wittgenstein: The Emergence of a New Philosophical Method* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 184.

Sympathy sans participation is quite an 'intellectual' feat. But then Wittgenstein has to be read most carefully in his absences rather than in the notorious implications of his 'language game'. Hence, the great interest that attaches to Professor Choudhary's study. This is not one of those bulldozing tracts that is bent on establishing—even parallels—by rough hewing available data. There is enthusiasm, though occasionally eagerness over, which in the very nature of the subject is almost predictable.

'Despite a lot of mostly well-known differences,' says Professor Choudhary, 'there is a good deal of similarities between Wittgensteinian philosophy and Advaita Vedānta. Further, these are not passing similarities but illuminating parallels. They can shed new light on Wittgensteinian philosophy as well as on Advaita Vedānta. They are thus also capable of bringing the two into a philosophically fruitful comparison' (2). Professor Choudhary assumes that 'the differences are well-known'. Perhaps, yes. However, he could have provided the lay reader a resume of such differences. Moreover, there is some equivocation in the use of 'parallels' and 'comparisons'. I suppose there is some vital variation between the two.

The resultant study assumes eight chapters with adequate documentation, but over the entire study hangs the moot question of whether Wittgenstein had read any Vedantic textual sources. Most have noted—as the present author has—the great philosopher's 'acquaintance' with Rabindranath Tagore and the Upanishads indirectly through Immanuel Kant. This raises the annoying question of 'influence', on which it is

possible to argue that the Upanishadic thought was quite familiar to German philosophers. Perhaps 'influence' needs to be rid of rigidities; quite often we absorb ideas, which hang in the air, and draw our 'cerebral' breath from them.

Similar ambiguity marks the professor's view, in the 'Introduction', on 'the social and interdisciplinary relevance of its work', a staple requirement for any research work funded by the University Grants Commission and other agencies. Here the professor identifies issues related to values and ethics, among others. The second chapter focuses on the problems of translation and context, identity and difference in the context of an academic study. Academic engagements are particularly prone, in studies of parallels, to generalizations without adequate caution regarding generic terms. A frequent appearance here is that of religion and philosophy. Indeed, one has to tackle the issue raised by philosophers like Rorty very carefully: he questions the presence of any 'neutral cultural space' in which comparisons are possible.

In the third chapter the author proves to be of great interest to a lay reader. Here we are given a resume of the views of, notably, G C Nayak, R C Pradhan, K Satchidananda Murthy, and others. But the chapter seems to end on a weak note with an almost predictable citation from that fascinating study by E W F Tomlin, which, if extremely readable, is a bit 'impressionistic'. In effect, it is too grand a statement to claim that 'the West is changing its general conception of Indian philosophy, especially Advaita Vedānta' (65).

But the most interesting chapter is the sixth, on Ethics. The letter in which Wittgenstein himself described *Tractatus*—"The book's point is an ethical one"—is quoted by the author, though I would have wished that Professor Choudhary would have given us some of his insights on Wittgenstein's claim in that same letter: 'I have managed in my book to put everything firmly, into place by being silent about it' (137). Is the great philosopher endorsing the Advaitic perception of silence, *mauna*, as the language of communion that every philosopher eventually is driven to? Where communication ceases, communion takes over.

The last two chapters—one on religion, the other on concluding remarks—round off the ar-

guments, some of which have already appeared earlier. There is an interesting study of 'The "Frog" and the "Fly": Two Parallel Parables' (212). The comparison is between the Upanishadic 'frog in a sealed well' and the famous Wittgensteinian 'fly in a fly bottle'. The sealed well and the open bottle are full of narrative richness, from which one would benefit in a more extended discussion than what is available.

Professor Choudhary's book is a valuable study in many ways. The suggestion I feel like making is that the citations from available secondary sources could have been minimized, so that the crucial theses of the author emerge more clearly. The publisher D K Printworld maintains its excellent production values.

Dr M Sivaramkrishna

Former Head, Department of English
Osmania University, Hyderabad



Reforming Vaishno Devi Jagmohan

Rupa & Co, 7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002. Website: www.rupapublications.com. 2010. xiv + 305 pp. ₹ 395.

Since the coming of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, the work of projecting an enlightened Hinduism has been going on for a century by innumerable institutions founded during this time. But what about the repositories of the Sanatana Dharma that were already in existence? The temple culture of India has worked wonders for Indian society for two millennia by keeping society together, helping it in times of economic and political distress, and as inspiration for art and architecture. However, to remain healthy institutions need constant renewal by rejecting dead matter and infusing fresh life. It is well known that temple worship has had a significant influence in the Indian psyche. Unfortunately, rigidity regarding rituals, careless implementation of the same, and economic greed had rendered many temples into impossibilities, despite their popularity. Vaishno Devi was one of them. The transformation of Vaishno Devi into a favourite

temple for pilgrims is a wonder-message for the twenty-first century.

Jagmohan had been amidst the scorching flames of the partition holocaust and quite early in his growing-up years had become cynical about 'the state of our religion and new leadership'. Instead of moaning that nothing can redeem this 'benighted' religion and country, he set about quietly pursuing a regular career. His sensitivity caught all needed information about the state of the country, and he realized that India's Sanatana Dharma still held the key to national unity. Not born to be a mere figurehead in his profession, he used his office as the governor of Jammu and Kashmir to make the Vaishno Devi temple a comfortable shrine for pilgrims, a model for right management, and a reverential place of worship.

It was no easy task. It never is when you come face-to-face with entrenched forces that reject any forms of development. *Reforming Vaishno Devi* provides a blueprint for the future, should the common man be able to have the upper hand in managing his finances, religion, and culture. Today Vaishno Devi is garbage-free and beggar-free. No more is it shunned by tourists, while the pious pilgrims who have been coming here for decades are ecstatic. With the passing of the Sri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Act 1986, the temple came under the management of a new board that took over from the Baridars and Dharm Arth. The chapter 'Response, Reaction and Results' gives all that we need to know about this historic transformation of not only the temple but the surrounding countryside.

Reforming Vaishno Devi is, however, more than the problems of change, which included legal battles and Dr Karan Singh's gracious acceptance of the new dispensation. Thanks to Jagmohan's uncomplicated view of religion and society we learn that this is really a boost for the state's economy through tourism. It helps the preservation of heritage as also brings back to public memory great leaders of the region. In Vaishno Devi we now get to know about General Zorawar Singh, Baba Jitto, and Veer Ramachandra. There is also the saddening chapter on the Amarnath shrine, where politicians and communal elements gained the upper hand and thwarted attempts to make it as safe, comfortable, and prosperous as Vaishno Devi.

While each page enriches our understanding of religion, nation, and environment, the whole of Section II has plenty of educative notes on subjects like the Aryan invasion theory and the existence of the Saraswati River. The realization that Swami Vivekananda would surely exult that his coming has not been in vain comes upon us as we read: 'A reformed Hindu, in brief, would turn out to be a worthy son of a reinvigorated and healthy Mother Goddess. He would be best suited to serve not only Mother India but also Mother Earth. Being a believer in the unity of existence and committed to the welfare of humanity as a whole, he could make an effective contribution in checking the immense damage that human greed and current styles of life are causing to the planet' (259).

An inspiring call indeed from an achiever for Indians of the twenty-first century.

Prema Nandakumar

Researcher and Literary Critic
Srirangam



How to Organize Life?

A Vedanta Kesari Presentation

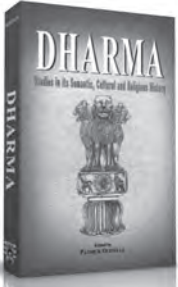
Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore,
Chennai 600 004. Website: www.chennaiamath.org. 2010. vi + 229 pp.
₹ 45.

The Indian tradition lays down various schemas to organize life. This book analyses them in the modern context. Shrutis and Smritis are seen through Swami Vivekananda's eyes. Complex concepts of dharma, caste, moksha, and karma yoga have been explained. The chapter 'Modern Man, Mind and the Meaning of Mythology' takes a fresh look at mythology and seeks to clear many misconceptions about the nature of myths.

A chapter details Swami Vivekananda's interpretation of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings, while another names the teachings of Swami Vivekananda as 'Vivekananda Smriti'. A careful reading of this work convinces one that new moral codes in consonance with traditional values and modern needs have to be created. Evolving out of the December 2002 special number of the Eng-

lish journal *Vedanta Kesari*, this work could be a manual of morality in the lines of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Narasimhananda
Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata



***Dharma: Studies in its
Semantic, Cultural and
Religious History***
Ed. Patrick Olivelle

Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U A Bungalow
Road, Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi
110 007. Website: www.mldb.com.
2009. viii + 492 pp. ₹ 1,195.

This scholarly work deals historically with dharma, a central feature of Indian civilization, in its cultural and religious aspects irrespective of linguistic, sectarian, or regional differences. There are nineteen papers by various leading scholars that deal thoroughly with each separate study. Such an effort was long overdue as confusion and inaccurate accounts have dogged the notion of dharma in the context of understanding the religio-cultural history of India. This volume shows that the term 'dharma' has been subject to evolution and change depending upon the context of different traditions and cultural groups, ranging from Hinduism to Jainism to Buddhism, from the ancient to the medieval to the modern periods.

The topics by the various authors are, briefly: Dharma's early history; dharma in the Rig Veda, semantic history, early Buddhism, and Jainism; the Vedas and Dharma Shastras; dharma's concept in the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and in classical philosophy; dharma's meaning in practice and authority; medicine and dharma; the significance of Kumarila's philosophy; and so on. This broad canvas clearly indicates how a civilization has maintained a metaphysical world view that allows for continuity in many regions, despite diverse religious sects with contrasting myths, rituals, customs, and teachings. The term 'dharma' is wide-ranged, and many other connotations have also arisen as it came in contact with Western concepts, not necessarily always in a scholarly context, but also within contending socio-political arenas.

We thus learn that dharma has moral connotations both in Hinduism and Buddhism. It stretches into many cultural spheres, like the dharma of castes and the life-stages within which it is enmeshed. It is commonly used by lay persons during social customs, ritual ceremonies as well as covering civil law, criminal law, and statecraft or royal law. Essentially, dharma has a connection to salvation, and its practice in everyday life is for leading one towards a transcendental order. That is the basic foundation of dharma, which is not merely for material gain or personal enjoyment through the performance of sacrifices, rites, offering gifts, and so on. In this way, although dharma is beyond existential goals, it is empirical—it is to be known and operated at an everyday experiential level. In this sense it is substantial, since it manifests itself only while dealing with people or performing one's duty without motives. This in turn is linked to *ṛta*, cosmic law, and to human affairs. Thus dharma, *ṛta*, and human life are interconnected. Dharma is to be impersonally performed for the sake of the larger cosmic order; this makes it a moral duty. It is also linked to the notion of karma in terms of deeds performed. Taking all this wide range of expressions on dharma, this book is a landmark contribution to the study of Indian civilization.

Prof. S C Malik

Retired UGC Professor of Anthropology,
New Delhi



***Universal Hinduism:
Towards a New Vision of
Sanatana Dharma***

Vamadeva Shastri
(David Frawley)

Voice of India, 2/18 Ansari Road,
New Delhi 110 002. Website: www.adityaprakashan.com. 2010. xi + 213 pp.
₹ 200.

The three parts of the book are introduced by Dharma Pravartaka (Frank Morales) and by Shivananda Murty's appreciation. In the first part, 'Universal Hinduism and Sanatana Dharma', the author gives many insights in the course of the

analysis of a plausible definition of Hinduism. He acknowledges the efforts of Swami Vivekananda in expounding Hindu teachings of yoga and Vedanta to the non-Indian world. Hinduism, as Sanatana Dharma, implies a universal and eternal tradition of truth, knowledge, and consciousness.

The first part also examines the relationship between Hinduism and other religions of the world as well as issues pertaining to interfaith dialogue, conversion, and Hindu identity. Global Hinduism has three aspects: revival of Hinduism in India, the spread of Hinduism worldwide, and the adaptations of Hindu teachings and practices by non-Indians. There is a need for new presentations of Hinduism in modern times due to new challenges in the global world view. The pluralistic nature of Hinduism is characterized by its dynamic unity in multiplicity. According to Sri Aurobindo, Sanatana Dharma is central to the soul of India, which is a cultural centre of the planet. India's place is to function as a global guru (25). Hindu teachings include yoga, Vedanta, Ayurveda, and so on. The author states that unlike other religions Hinduism is not merely based on faith in revelation, but has a profound respect for *viveka*, reason. Accordingly, Hinduism has a distinct identity and profound culture regarding a universal tradition of knowledge, experience, and practice. However, if Hinduism claims too much universality, it may lose its identity. And if it restricts its scope to nationalism and ethnic culture, it loses its universal outlook (46). In order to make Hinduism acceptable there need not be an attempt towards monotheism exclusively, because Sanatana Dharma includes dualism, monism, monotheism, and polytheism. An intellectual approach in Hindu thought is necessary for a higher realization of truth. According to the author, other organized religions cannot bring peace in the world and they need not put obstacles to the state of peace present in nature. Sanatana Dharma is distinguished from other religious traditions as it is based on wisdom, not merely on faith. Sanatana Veda Dharma gives way to knowledge; it goes beyond religion, science, and culture.

In part two the author considers Hinduism in the background of current global issues. Sanatana

Dharma, as an eternal and universal tradition of truth, allows cultural biodiversity. There is a considerable ecological awareness in Veda Dharma.

Finally, in part three, the author has made some significant observations regarding the current situation of humankind. He says: 'I do not think that we really heal our planet, or bring peace to society, unless we establish our inner link with the sacred universe' (174).

Hinduism has many potential dharmic concerns relating to politics, economics, society, and culture. There should be an inner knowledge revolution along with information technology. Hinduism is capable of generating internal knowledge for meaningful practical applications.

The contents of the book are serious and there is a message for the responsible citizens of this planet. However, some typographical and other errors in the book have to be corrected: the titles of part one and two in the table of contents should match with the corresponding titles inside the book; on page sixty, footnote 5, 'Order of the words' has to be changed for 'Order of the worlds'. A bibliography and an index at the end of the book would have been welcomed.

The book is useful for all Hindus and also for scholars working in the field of comparative religion.

Dr R I Ingalalli

Retired Professor of Philosophy, Chairman, and
Former Dean, Faculty of Social Science,
Karnataka University, Dharwad

BOOKS RECEIVED



The Varkaris: An Introduction

Dr Satish K Kapoor

Centre for the Preservation of Heritage of Maharashtra, Dayanand Institutions, Dayanand Nagar, Solapur 413 002. Website: www.davsolapur.org. 2010. 30 pp.

Written by an ex-British Council scholar, this booklet briefly introduces the history, beliefs, and traditions of the Varkaris, a popular bhakti movement in Maharashtra.

REPORTS



Commemoration of the 175th Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna

The 175th birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated with great zeal by the following centres. **Baghbazar:** procession, discourses, drama, musical performance, and a seminar on 'Inter-religious Harmony and Peace'; **Kalady:** public meetings, bhajans, and a cultural programme on 16 April 2011; **Malda:** discourses, devotional music, and drama on 9 and 10 April; **Sarisha:** procession, drama, discourses, and a musical performance from 25 to 27 March; **Vadodara:** public meetings, devotional music, and film shows from 28 March to 17 April.

Commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda

On the initiative taken by the **Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad**, 57 educational institutions in and around Hyderabad have started Vivekananda Centres of Human Excellence. The faculty of Vivekananda Institute of Human Excellence of the centre will visit these places regularly and conduct classes on Swami Vivekananda's message, personality development, and related topics for students of those institutions.

The following centres organized various programmes to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. **Kanpur:** devotees' convention on 10 April; **Port Blair:** youth conference on 23 April; **Salem:** two dramas on the life and message of Swami Vivekananda on 12 and 26 January.



Convention and procession at Rajahmundry

News from Branch Centres

On 27 March **Ramakrishna Math, Chennai**, celebrated the centenary of Holy Mother's visit to Chennai with special puja and homa, film shows, devotional songs, and reading from her life. More than 2,000 devotees attended the programme.

Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Rajahmundry, celebrated the centenary of Holy Mother's visit to Rajahmundry and the diamond jubilee of the ashrama from 31 March to 4 April through various programmes such as procession, devotees' convention, youth convention, women's convention, public meetings, and cultural programmes. Chandi homa was performed on 2 April at Pushkar Ghat on the Godavari River, where Holy Mother had bathed. Nearly 50 monks and 3,000 devotees attended the function.

Sri Jagannath Pahadia, governor of Haryana, and Smt Urmila Singh, governor of Himachal Pradesh, visited **Ramakrishna Mission**

Ashrama, Chandigarh, on 1 and 2 April respectively in connection with the centre's annual celebration.

The newly constructed school building of **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Bhopal**, was inaugurated on 12 April.

Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Kalady, celebrated its platinum jubilee from 14 to 17 April. Special pujas, homas, public meetings, cultural programmes, a youth convention, and a devotees' convention formed part of the four-day programme. Swami Prabhananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, presided over the public meeting held on 16 April, in which Sri K Sankaranarayanan, governor of Maharashtra, was the chief guest.

Sri Naveen Patnaik, chief minister of Orissa, inaugurated the newly constructed school and hostel buildings for tribal students at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Hatamuniguda**, on 19 April. Swami Prabhananda delivered the keynote address at the public meeting held on this occasion.

Achievements

On 20 February Teresa Diagnostic Centre awarded Lifetime Achievement Honour to **Ramakrishna Mission, Viveknagar**, in recognition of its achievements in the field of health care services in Tripura. The award carried a memento, a citation, two books, and a sum of 20,000 rupees. Besides, two students of the school of the centre won gold medals in the senior group, and another student of the school won a gold medal in the junior group in the 10th Hope Talent Contest in the field of art organized by Schools India, Chennai.

The Sarada Kindergarten of **Ramakrishna Mission, Singapore**, has received the prestigious certificate of achievement in Singapore Pre-school Accreditation Framework (SPARK)

assessment. The kindergarten is one of the few in Singapore to have received this certificate.

Rupak Kumar Thaqur, a class-8 student of **Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Purulia**, has secured the 3rd position in the International Mathematics Olympiad Test 2010 organized by the Science Olympiad Foundation, New Delhi.

Relief

Earthquake and Tsunami Relief • In the wake of the devastating earthquake and the ensuing tsunami that hit the northeast coast of Japan on 11 March, **Nippon Vedanta Kyokai** (Vedanta Society of Japan) distributed the following items to the victims: 101 blankets, 14 packets of milk powder, 38 water bottles, 75 soap bars, 1,550 cotton masks, 183 towels, various sanitary materials, and 500 postcards. The centre also purchased different kinds of green vegetables and dispatched them on 24 April to the shelters set up in the worst-affected areas in Tohoku.

Fire Relief • **Karimganj** centre distributed 125 kg rice, 25 kg dal, 50 dhotis, 25 saris, and 50 plates among 25 families whose huts had been gutted by fire at Khat Line area in Karimganj.

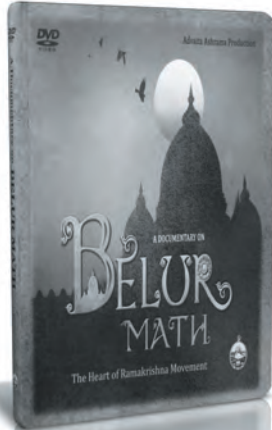
Distress Relief • The following centres distributed various items to needy people. **Baghbazar**: 2,300 saris, 200 lungis, 106 shirts, 118 children's garments; **Chapra**: 236 blankets; **Guwahati**: 100 blankets, 30 steel plates, 6 tatsals (weaving machines), and 6 sewing machines; **Kankurgachhi**: 250 saris; **Malda**: 10 bicycles, 150 school bags, 150 umbrellas, 150 packets of Horlicks, 150 toothbrushes, 150 tubes of toothpaste; **Sikra Kulingram**: 250 blankets; **Swamiji's House**: 2,115 children's garments and 505 woollen chaddars.

Rehabilitation Relief • On 12 March a four-room school building at Dhaneti village in Kutch, constructed by **Rajkot** centre, was inaugurated and handed over to Sri Ramakrishna Seva Samiti, Dhaneti. Besides, the centre built, in collaboration with the government of Gujarat, sixty houses at Parevada village in Rajkot district and handed them over on 13 March to the beneficiaries, who belong to the Madari (snake-charmers) community.



BELUR MATH

A DOCUMENTARY



This documentary chronicles the beginnings of Belur Math, the heart of the Ramakrishna movement. In a style at once informative and engaging, this film records the unfoldment of the headquarters of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. Containing footage of historic value, much of it brought to the public for the first time, this is a must have for those who wish to know about this organisation and also for those who are ardent students and admirers of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda tradition.

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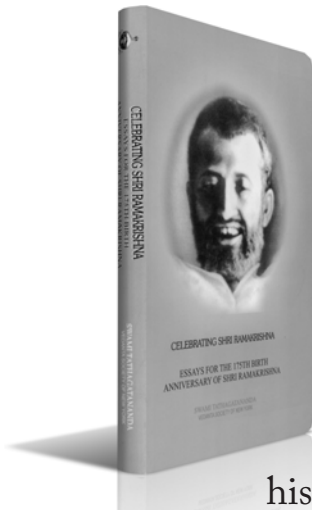


Write to: **ADVAITA ASHRAMA,**

5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700 014, India

Phones: 91-33-22644000 / 22640898 / 22866483

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by Swami Tathagatananda

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Please write to:

ADVAITA ASHRAMA, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700 014, India

Phones: 91-33-22644000 / 22640898 / 22866483, E-mail: mail@advaitaashrama.org